THE IMPACT OF THE SYMBOLISM AND ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ANKH, SUN-DISK AND WADJET EYE ON MODERN ("WESTERN") SOCIETY

by

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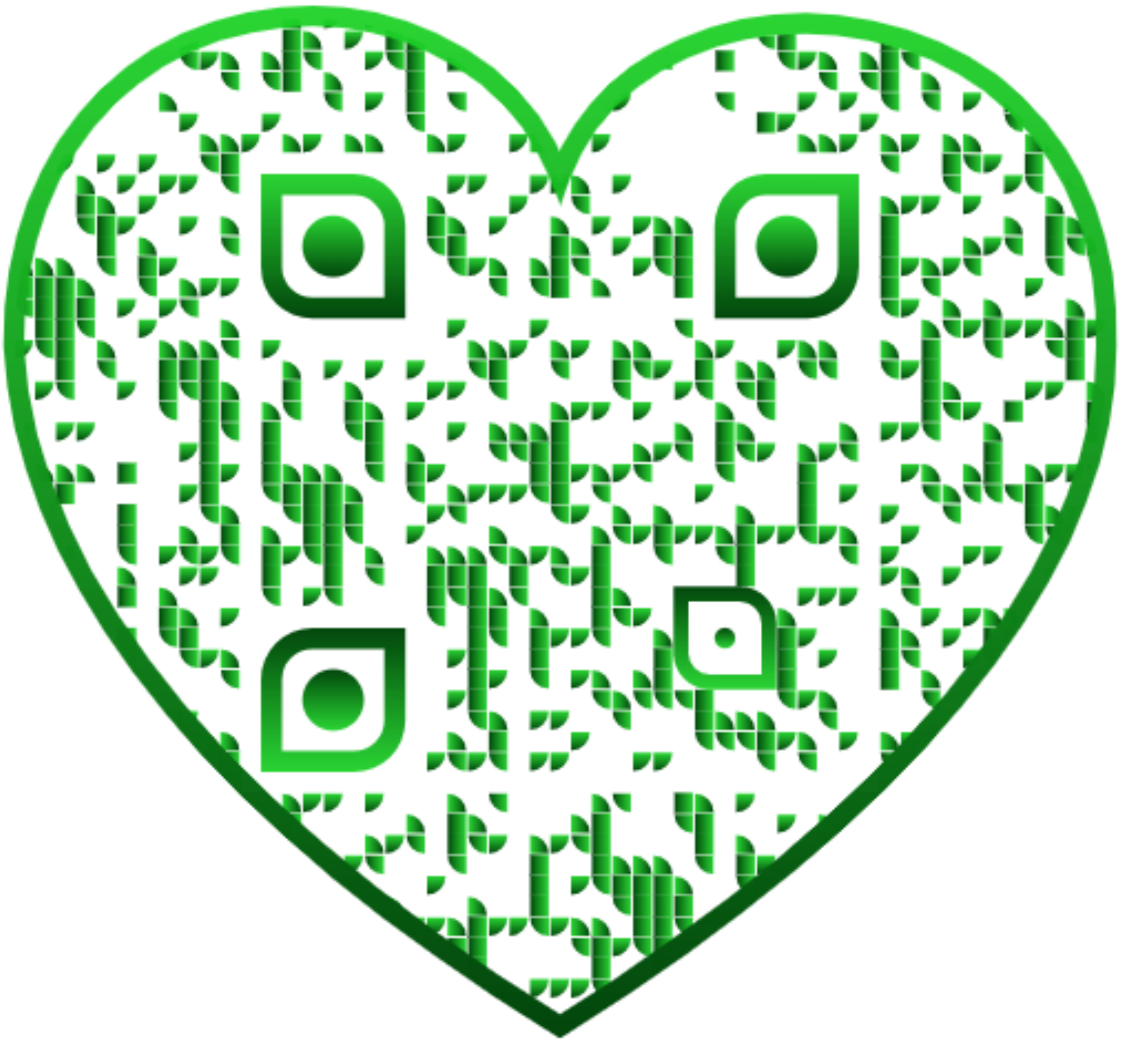

DECLARATION

Student number: 41610728

I declare that THE IMPACT OF THE SYMBOLISM AND ICONOGRAPHY OF THE ANKH, SUN-DISK AND WADJET EYE ON MODERN ("WESTERN") SOCIETY is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

Derick Coetzee .....

Full name Date

DEDICATION

To יהוה, my God and source of Wisdom and Understanding, who gives us the knowledge to work and the strength to continue.

Dedicated to the Increased Awareness of our Historic Heritage. I hope that this small contribution helps to increase our pool of knowledge and explore the ancient world. May we learn from the mistakes of those before, so that we do not repeat those mistakes again.

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Egypt has long been a place of intrigue and mystery, being held in high esteem during ancient times. In modern times ancient Egypt has once again risen to such a position with many ancient Egyptian-based symbols and iconology being used in modern culture since its birth in the renaissance. Three easily identifiable and commonly used symbols are identified: the *ankh*, sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*. This study attempts to evaluate and explore the extent of the influence of ancient Egyptian symbols and iconography on modern culture as a whole. This is achieved through emic analysis and comparative studies, comparing the context of the original ancient Egyptian symbols (in terms of their symbolic form, origins and meanings/usage) to the modern usage of the same symbols. A comparison between the contexts and usage of these three symbols in ancient Egypt and modern society shows that they are part of a wider trend of "romanticising" ancient cultures to "enchant" our modern culture.

KEY WORDS: ancient Egyptian influence; Ancient Near Eastern influence; *ankh*; comparative perspective; comparative studies; Coptic Church; emic analysis; Iconography; Iconology; modern culture; Neo-Pagans; sun-disk; *Wadjet Eye*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Pharaohs", "Pyramids", "Mummies", "Spells" are all words which conjure up images of a powerful, mystic culture along the banks of the Nile. Here magic, god-like wisdom, knowledge and riches were created out of the sands of the desert. Here great Pharaohs ruled and built even greater monuments and temples filled with riches of all kinds, secret passageways, rich symbolism and treasure chambers guarded by mystical guards and beings. Here magic had its most powerful roots, roots that should be explored, exploited, and if mastered, will open up the secrets of the Pharaohs and their riches.

This is ancient Egypt in the minds of people, ancient and modern. It is this fascination and respect for Egypt as the apex of scholarly learning and culture, whether true or not, that has made it such a strong ancient cultural theme to relate to. In modern society, if one mentions ancient Egypt, there is always a hushed tone to the conversation, as if something holy or powerful is being mentioned.

This has caused the Ancient Near East, and more specifically, ancient Egypt, to have a great cultural contribution to the Greek and European worlds, specifically with regards to symbolism and iconography (Bernal 1991). These icons and symbols have become such an intricate part of our modern-day life. Some of these come from ancient sources, such as the Egyptian Church Fathers Athanasius and Origen (Kákosy 1995 & Oliver, et al 2009). Others are more recent and modern, such as the various "*Mummy*" movies, books with ancient Egyptian themes (Wilbur Smith's Egyptian Series) and games such as *Age of Empires: Age of Mythology* and *Pharaoh*, which give players, control over the Egyptian Empire, making it more popular(Ensemble 1997 & 2002). Authors such as Edith Nesbit, who pioneered and developed the children's book and the magic therein, drew heavily on ancient Egyptian ideologies and ancient near eastern motifs in her works, such as the "Amulet" (Fromm 1984, Knoepflmacher 1987 and Lansner 1966). Even the cross and the old pharmaceutical "℞" sign has their origins in the *ankh* (Cox 2007, Harpur 2002 & Healy 1977) and the Eye of Horus (Koenig 1939), respectfully.

It is in this light that we shall explore the usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* in modern, "Western" Culture[1], and by extension, South Africa. These three symbols are the most common, easily recognisable and uniquely ancient Egyptian symbols. They are the most obvious examples of ancient Egyptian culture found in our modern culture. Modern people, especially teenagers and students, wear jewellery and accessories that show or contain one or more of these symbols, or symbolism associated with these symbols. Many buildings and constructions in Europe and European-style countries have Sun-Disk and/or *ankh* symbolism built into them. In the same way, much of the theology of the Catholic Church, and especially their symbols, can be seen to be influenced by Egyptian ones.

Therefore, in this study, we shall examine the ancient Egyptian symbolism and iconography of the *ankh*, Sun-Disk and the *Wadjet Eye*, comparing it to their usage in our modern culture, thus assessing the effect that ancient Egyptian symbolism, and the idea of ancient Egypt, has had on our modern culture. In this way, the study of ancient Egypt will become more relevant to the modern layman. This is, however, not a common topic, as research more often than not only focusses on Ancient or modern symbols and their usage, rarely both, as we are attempting to do here.

Since this study focusses on symbols and the iconography and use of these symbols, we will not look at ideologies and non-visual symbolism such as found in literature. As stated above, there is a lot of Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern symbolism in western literature, especially in books by Nesbit and Pratchet. However thee fall outside the scope of the study and can serve as material for a future study.

[1] "Western Culture" is taken to mean the culture and cultural heritage of Europe and its colonies (the Americas, parts of Africa and the Corporate World that uses English, Spanish or Portuguese as first language) used because it is the general culture of most of the industrialized, developed and developing countries on Earth. The quotations refer to the fact that this is a colloquial, and in many cases a controversial, term as it represents the oppressive colonial cultures and regimes that sought to spread their culture, religion and spheres of influence to the rest of the world since the 16th century AD.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

Ancient Egyptian symbols, most notably the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*, are becoming increasingly popular in our modern culture. This raises the question of why this is happening and to what extent is ancient Egyptian culture influencing our modern culture through them. As Vermeulen (2010) pointed out in his thesis: "no intensive investigation has been made to establish any relationship between seal iconography, especially Egyptian motifs, and contemporary religious practises in Israel and Judah" (Vermeulen 2010:276-277). In this study, I would like to take this statement even further and extend it to our modern culture, i.e. there has not been sufficient comparisons drawn and investigations made into how ancient Egyptian religious iconography affected our religious practices and continues to affect our modern secular culture. This entails the "research problem", or "research trigger". In dealing with this, we shall attempt to answer the following questions that highlights the Who, What, Where and Why of the usage of the symbols:

- Where does our modern usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* as symbols come from?
- How does our modern culture use these ancient symbols?
- How does the usage and understanding of these symbols in modern culture relate to and compare with their original ancient Egyptian usage and understanding?
- What impact does ancient Egyptian Culture have on modern culture through these symbols, in terms of the original usage and understanding behind them?
- Why are these symbols so popular and why do modern people admire Egyptian culture so much that these core Egyptian motifs are found in our culture, more than 2000 years removed from the original culture?
- How does our modern usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* compare to that of ancient Egypt and how is this influencing our art and religion (Culture)?

These answers, or lack of answers if that is the case, will shed light on how modern people view ancient Egyptian symbols, what their motivations are for using them and how these symbols influence our culture as they become part of normal usage.

There has been very little research done on this topic specifically and the little that is available is usually smothered in other studies, it would seem. This study and dissertation is an attempt to

rectify that, opening the topic of ancient Egypt in our modern culture, making the subject more contemporary and relevant.

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

The *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* are some of the most distinctive ancient Egyptian symbols used in modern culture. Preliminary research and observation seems to point to the possibility that their modern usage is linked to the mystique with which ancient Egypt is viewed, and that the usage of ancient Egyptian symbols is an attempt to invoke the mystery and uniqueness of the Egyptian culture, as well as its ideology. Ancient Egyptian culture therefore seems to have a hold on the imagination of modern people to the extent that it pervades (some would say Invades) our modern culture. This "hold" on modern culture comes from the Greek (and thus Renaissance) Culture that held ancient Egyptian myths and Magic in high esteem.

In this study, we will attempt to bear this out, or find another, more probable cause. Through Emic analysis and a comparison between the ancient meaning behind the Egyptian symbols used in modern culture and their modern usages. The cultural ties between the Greek and modern cultures will also be examined.

1.3 SOURCES

This is primarily a cultural-symbolic comparison, and therefore the primary sources are the physical symbols themselves, and how they are used. Secondary sources will take the form of scholarly articles on the ancient Egyptian symbols and any modern cultural article/study that details their uses, or the art in which they are used. These will be reviewed and outlined in the Literature Review section below.

As mentioned earlier, there has been little research and literature published that specifically deals with the cultural impact of ancient Egypt on modern culture. There are, however, many studies that compare Greek and modern cultures, and these will be looked at as reference for the kind of research attempted here. The small amount of comparative material on ancient Egypt there is, is usually tucked in inside a study or article on specific ancient artefacts or modern art, where the effects are but mentioned. This means that we have to predominantly rely on primary data, and draw our own opinions, based on primary and secondary sources dealing with the

ancient Egyptian symbols and iconography and modern sources alone. This approach would also keep the comparison relatively "pure", as only primary and core secondary sources will be used, no derived secondary and tertiary sources. These sources will be thoroughly dealt with in the Literature Review and in-text.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify the usage of the *ankh*, *Wadjet Eye* and Sun-Disk, traditionally ancient Egyptian cultural motifs and symbols, in our modern, "Western" society. These three symbols were chosen because they are very recognizable as ancient Egyptian, and would show to what extent modern people use recognizably Egyptian symbols as opposed to symbols that "snuck in" and look "normal". First, a historic link between ancient Egyptian culture and our own will be explored and established, both past (through Greek and Roman cultures, our "cultural ancestors", so to speak), and present (the fascination that our western culture has with the ancient world, and most notably with ancient Egypt). Using these links as an origin-point, the usage and meanings of the *ankh*, *Wadjet Eye* and Sun-Disk in our modern western culture will be shown, from our own cultural beginnings in the early centuries AD, to the present. Their native ancient Egyptian cultural and artistic contexts will also be briefly explored to find a valid comparison and sounding-board, to gauge how the usage and meaning of these symbols have changed, if at all, from the ancient Egyptian, to our modern culture, using our research questions (outlined above), as a guideline.

Since this is, in effect, an iconographic comparison between ancient and modern cultural elements, a cultural comparison-model is the best method to use. A cultural comparison is one of the oldest and most used comparison models in anthropology, ancient cultural studies and archaeology. Culture being the source material in all these fields, it is always easier to compare one culture with another, as a way of highlighting and explaining certain elements (Munsterberg 2009).

However, the iconographic element of the research method and content should never be forgotten, since a purely cultural comparison, i.e. a comparison using cultural aspects alone, would ignore the artistic aspects of the iconography. The artistic aspect is important as the

original artistic context and state of mind of the artist is usually found only when an artistic analysis is also done on the art/icon, and how the original artists used it.

Here we follow Yanow (2014) in her description of "interpretive policy analysis" where the physical culture and cultural acts and symbols are interpreted to gauge what they meant to their original purveyors. This is useful, according to her, to prevent the misunderstanding of such cultural symbols according to our own culture, and objectively view the symbols in the source culture (Yanow 2014:9-14). This is exactly what we would want to avoid in this study, as it would be of no avail to only study something, such as a culture, in the light of our own culture when trying to gauge how our culture was influenced by that culture. This would also fulfil the goal of seeing the symbols in the light the original artists meant and developed it, and not in our own modern-culture context.

A stylistic analysis, though valuable in tracing the growth and styles of the three symbols that we are focusing on here, would confuse the issue of cultural identity and cultural function/meaning with stylistic aspects of development and visualisation. Here we are only concerned with how ancient Egyptian people saw these symbols and how modern people in a western culture see them.

Gathering as much data as possible is key, as the effects of Egyptian culture in modern culture is either obscured by the many years separating the two, or the cultural artefact in question has been so sensitized as "normal" by our "western" culture that it is hard to distinguish what is "foreign" in origin, and what is not. This is highlighted and discussed by Richard Brislin in his 1979 article on comparative research methodology. We shall use his Cross Cultural method of comparative cultural studies (Brislin 1979:216) as it fits our study exactly: using cultural items and discussing how one culture sees and uses them, and then looking at how the other culture views these same items, in this case, Egyptian symbols. In doing so, we can easily determine how ancient Egyptian symbols are used today, whether in the same spirit as their original context, or not and only as some "interesting eye-catcher" for commercial purposes, or another purpose that has nothing to do with the original.

In this regard, we shall follow Brislin (1979:217) in what he calls "emic analysis" where one analyses how the culture under analysis viewed a certain cultural entity. In this case, we shall

look at how the *ankh*, *Wadjet Eye* and Sun-Disk was perceived and used in ancient Egypt, then how people today perceive and use these same symbols. This will determine to what extent the original context of the symbols have survived.

This ties in with Marjorie Munsterberg's discussion (2009) of how to correctly analyse and interpret the iconography in art. Although her focus is on the renaissance era art, as is her discussion of Erwin Panofsky's iconographic and iconological analysis techniques, we can still follow her and Panofsky's reasoning and apply it to our own model. Munsterberg argues that in a larger work of art, there are certain iconographic symbols that add hidden or fuller meanings to the art as a whole, using Panofsky's analysis of Robert Campin's Mérode Altarpiece (15th century AD) and Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Wedding (from the same time). She follows Panofsky's Iconological technique of synthesizing facts and reconstructing the original context of the artist and work, and how the artist would have seen the image, as well as the motivation behind the image. This dovetails with Brislin's "emic analysis" of how a culture would view cultural items in their individual and larger context. Iconography, Iconology and the thinking behind them will be discussed in the chapter titled "Iconographic Studies".

These different analyses and cultural comparison models may be combined to best serve our current purpose. In this regard, we should look at the evidence, both past and present, using a model that supports both iconographic analysis and cultural comparison. This may be done by simply taking the main aspects of a cultural comparison and using them in conjunction with an iconographic analysis of the symbols. Thus, we are not only looking at the cultural "artefacts" that are shared, we want to gauge the extent and depth of influence the Egyptian culture had on modern culture. Since culture is alive through people, we shall look at what people see as normal, and how people see ancient Egypt today, through the originally ancient Egyptian symbols that we use. This will show how much Egyptian culture and cultural ideas are accepted by our own culture today.

Practically, most of our primary sources are visual sources, as we are examining ancient Egyptian symbols in modern culture. Symbols and design motifs in icons, art (in its various forms), jewellery, architecture and religious iconography will be compared and analysed in both ancient Egypt and modern culture. Under this, the physical structures and contexts of the modern symbols will be examined in the light of their ancient Egyptian understanding. More abstract

sources such as the symbolism in the belief system of the ancient Egyptians, usage in ancient and modern art and the cross/*ankh* motifs will also be examined as primary and secondary sources. Here modern photos and drawing and other modern sources will be used as primary source material to show how they were influenced by ancient Egyptian symbolism and ideology.

Art that features ancient Egyptian motifs will also be examined. This includes jewellery, pop-cultural images (such as album art, performer outfits and stage props), and other more traditional "art" forms, such as paintings.

Modern video games have a more profound impact on ideology and culture because of their interactive nature. Many popular games such as the *Assassin's Creed* Series, Prince of Persia, *Age of Empires*, the Lara Croft: Tomb Raider series and other action-adventure titles have Egyptian iconography or symbolism portrayed by one or more character (usually the bad-guy) or it becomes the key to unlocking some hidden treasure/quest. Some games even let you be an Egyptian or control the Egyptian empire. All of these promote Egyptian symbols and ideas, though purely as a by-product of using Egyptian culture. These will, however, be looked at as indicators and sources for the effect of Egyptian culture on our modern one, especially the younger generations who grew up with these games, and therefore these symbols.

The effect of these Egyptian cultural symbols will also be examined in the symbolism and iconography of various modern religious orders and belief systems, such as the Christian Church, Paganism and the Masonic Order. The latter is, however, a special case as we will see later, since the Masons do not use our three symbols directly, focusing on the Pyramid and Sun.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

The main limitation to this study, as with all studies of the past, is that the original people aren't around anymore. This means that we cannot go ask the original artists and conceptualists of the symbol what they were thinking when they first used it. We cannot go to the supervisors, architects and master builders who commissioned the monuments and ask them about why the symbols were positioned in a certain way, or what they meant. This is the main difference between archaeology and anthropology. Anthropologists can just hop on a plane and go look for a living informant that has first-hand knowledge, perhaps even the artist himself. Archaeologists

and students of history need to bridge the period-gap between themselves and their subject matter. This requires that a certain methodology be followed, as outlined above.

Though this is the most important limitation, it is not the only one. The amount of evidence we have about what the ancients thought of their symbols isn't concrete. Moreover, this begs the question of whether our modern data isn't perhaps affected by the very phenomenon that causes modern people to use the symbols, where we use our modern feelings and ideas to create a context for ancient artefacts. The limitation lies therein that only information that is truly ancient in origin can be used to gauge the ancient context, limiting one's sources considerably.

Furthermore, if a symbol is used in modern times that merely looks like the ancient symbol, did the ancient one influence the modern artist directly or indirectly? If indirectly, how are you going to verify this link? This poses a technical problem that can only be sorted out with a proper sorting of the sources. It is very important not to simply go and link symbols that are not related to each other.

These limitations are overcome, I believe, by using an emic model, as outlined in the previous section on the methodology I propose to follow in this study. Furthermore, the structure of the study should make the subject matter clear and keep it within its delimitations and bounds.

1.6 LAYOUT

This study is divided into "research" chapters (from chapter 2-4), a comparative control chapter (chapter 5), a comparative study chapter (chapter 6) and then closes and "bridges the Gap" between ancient and modern symbols.

After the literature review, where our sources are discussed, we will set the "scene" of research in terms of methodology, previous studies and defining concepts such as "culture-change" and "iconography/ iconology" (Chapter 3-4).

Looking at concepts of cultural change, such as diffusion, and how these work to create shared culture, will explain how Egyptian cultural elements came to be in Hellenistic, European and later modern Western culture. We will also look at Iconography, Iconology and verbal/non-verbal communication, of which symbolism is a major part. These concepts will inform the methodology

and flow of this study, as well as the focus on the symbolism and symbols themselves, using the principles of an emic analysis.

After laying this foundation and background in the theory of iconology and culture change, we will study the Egyptian Symbols (*ankh*, Sun-Disk and *Wadjet Eye*) in an ancient Egyptian Cultural Context (Chapter 5). We will look at how the ancient Egyptians used, developed and saw these symbols, and what their original ideologies were, exploring their possible origins. This will form the basis of comparison against which to measure the modern usage of these symbols. This forms one half of the core of this study.

After laying the background and setting up our standard of comparison, we will explore ancient Egyptian Symbolism & Iconography in Modern Culture – how these ancient symbols are used in modern life (Chapter 6). We will compare this modern usage for each symbol to their original usage, highlighting the similarities and differences in usage, and so showing how modern people interpret each symbol as opposed to how the symbol was used at first. This forms the second half of the core reason for the study.

These findings will then be taken together in the final chapter (Chapter 7), where we will bridge the gap between ancient and modern, and conclude how our western culture is affected by ancient Egyptian culture.

In the next chapter, we will take a look at cultural change and interaction; specifically how ancient Egyptian culture diffused to, and was acculturated by, Classical and "Christian" civilizations and groups. On this foundation a strong study may be built, focusing on the symbols themselves using the principles of emic analysis described earlier.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of clarity, we shall divide our literary sources into the different headings or themes used in the dissertation. Please note that these are core sources, and that they are only briefly discussed, as they will be thoroughly dealt with in the dissertation itself, especially primary sources such as websites.

2.1 CULTURAL SHIFT

The purpose of the section on Cultural Shift, together with the one on Iconography & Iconology, is to set the direction and "scene" behind the research done. The chapter also serve to show how the phenomenon of culture exchange is studied and how it can come to pass. For this we look at Birken (1992 & 1999) who attempts to define Civilization/Culture, especially "Western" culture as opposed to more ancient ones using the Chaos Theory and other culture-models to explain cultural interaction, growth and change. Many of his models and ideas can be used to explain how ancient cultures interact with modern ones, as well as the kind of amalgamated culture we have today.

Lyons (2014) and Flaig (2003) both help to further define this Western Culture and how it interacts with the world, especially the ancient "enchanted" world, to fill a gap of "disenchantment".

The terms acculturation and diffusion also help understand the interaction between cultures, and these are discussed in depth in various articles such as Linton, Herskovits & Redfield (1935), Linton (1940), Taylor (1991) and Devereux & Loeb (1947). These articles, though old, discuss the basics and the original usage of acculturation as term and tool to understand cultural interaction.

This interaction also ties in with the study of communication, and here we can add Martin & Nakayama (2007) as standard communication studies textbook, though communication studies plays a greater role in the chapter on Iconography.

Faulkner (1991), Knapp (1988, 1992, 1995), Koehl (2008), Cox (2007) and Kuhrt (2009) were used for some background and ancient sources, with Faulkner concentrating on Egyptian military, Knapp focusing on the island nations and their very intricate and rich cultural interactions, Koehl

expanding on Knapp's work with some modern methods and Cox and Kuhrt providing general information and some more examples.

No study of cultural interaction can be complete without also looking at the infamous Martin Bernal and the Black Athena saga (1987, 1991 & 2001). Van Binsbergen (2009) weighs up the pros and cons of Bernal's theory that ancient Greek culture owes more to ancient Egypt than is accepted in terms of culture. Levine & Lefkowitz both also examine the Black Athena theory, also looking at the phenomenon of marginalizing any research that radically and fundamentally challenges the long-accepted status quo. However, due to our study being focussed on the shared iconography of the *Ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* between ancient Egypt and modern culture, Bernal falls outside the main scope of study.

For the Greek perspective of ancient Egypt, we turn to Kákosy (1995) and indirectly Whitehouse (1995) who explored the concept of "ancient Egypt" in Greek and European thought. Whitehouse also brings in the Christian Church as part of the European awakening of knowledge. Here we will also use Figueras (2014) and Gundani & Jafta (2009) as base-texts for the study of early church history, most notably the Egyptian origin of many early church fathers and doctrines. Knappert (1995) also points out how our modern western culture of enquiry and thought came from Greek culture.

Throughout this dissertation we used the Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2010 software package as a dependable and peer-referenced reference for quick facts, some images and other information (dates, locations and other information that are not core to the study but help enrich it.)

Websites are, as a matter of course, part of any modern research involving modern culture. Websites have been discussed in text as they form a part of the study itself, as they are cultural elements of our modern culture. In fact, it can almost be argued that where the ancient world had most of their information on monuments, we today have most of our information somewhere on the internet, making it, in spirit, our modern version of a giant monolithic monument hanging over us and reminding us of the power of our civilization, much like ancient monuments had the same effect on the populace. Websites are listed separately in the last section of this chapter.

2.2 ICONOGRAPHIC STUDIES

The chapter on iconography ties in with the cultural shift chapter, though helps ground our methodology and subject matter to symbols and their iconography. Because of the symbolic nature of the three symbols we are comparing, iconographic and symbolic methods of comparison from art and renaissance studies will help in the methodology of the research.

Buckley's study (1998) of the iconography of music in visual representation and Fletcher's study (1989) on how Iconography is affected by our thoughts/culture shows some different ways of looking at presentation and representation of ideas as symbols in various forms.

In searching for the right methodology, I came across Erwin Panofsky's definitions and theorems on Iconology and Iconography, which contains many elements of emic analysis as set out by Yanow (2014). For this we turned to Panofsky's own works on Iconology and Iconography (Panofsky 1939, 1955 & a reprint in 1991) on how images and symbols communicate their meaning. This led into the Stuart Hall model of communication as set out in Martin & Nakayama (2007) and Vermaak (2011)[2].

Though criticized (Taylor 2008 gives a list of the most notable critics), Panofsky's definitions may be used in adapted form to look at how Egyptian symbols are seen, perceived and used in modern culture. Some iconographic studies in the Ancient Near East also yielded some methodology to incorporate into the current research. These are Budin (2006) who critically reviewed some current work in iconography and iconographic methodology in the Ancient Near East, James (1982) who iconographically looked at images of the goddess Wadjet and how she was portrayed, comparing her to Amasis and the well-sourced work by Te Velde (1986) who comprehensively looked at the iconography and deeper symbolism of Egyptian hieroglyphs. This particular source will be used later in the Ancient part of the research as well, as it, together with the Egyptian Grammar by Sir Allan Gardiner (see later) gives a comprehensive picture of how ancient Egyptians might have meant and used symbols of the Wadjet and the *Ankh*.

[2] In a Reader for "Communicaton in the Ancient Near East", Unisa Press

We also looked at Renate van Dijk's Master's Dissertation (2011) titled "*The Motif of the Bull in the Ancient Near East: An Iconographic Study*" for some pointers as to the direction and methodology one might use in an iconographic study. Her methodology in looking at how images from the past are to be "read" helped confirm and substantiate our other sources on the topic (Panofsky and Yanow).

2.3 ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

The section on the Ancient context of the symbols simply reviews the existing scholarship on the *ankh*, sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*. For the ancient Egyptian context of the symbols, we turned to standard works on Ancient Near Eastern/ancient Egyptian culture for general background and facts, bringing in some specialised studies for more specific aspects.

As standard works on the subject of ancient Egypt, we used:

- Budge & Baldock (ed, 2011)
- Budge (1904)
- Cartwright (1929)
- Cox (2007)
- Gardiner (1927/ 3rd rev. 2001)
- Gardiner (1964)
- Hornung (1995)
- Kuhrt (2009)
- Petrie (1902)
- Pinch (2002)
- Te Velde (1986)
- Te Velde (1995)
- Van Dijk (1995)
- Watterson (1999)

These books and articles lay the foundation of most ancient Egyptian studies, especially in terms of iconography and symbols.

Budge's works concern themselves with mostly primary evidence, categorizing and organising them into a system. Though this is a relatively modern invention, such a system does help organize known data. The problem is, of course, that such a system must be free from modern interpretation and ideas that would order the data in a system that differs from the ancient. One can therefore only use these kinds of "foundation works" as reference and a starting point for research.

Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* was instrumental in understanding what our study symbols meant as symbols in the language itself. I used it together with Pinch (2002), Van Dijk (1995), Cartwright (1929) and Te Velde (1986) to study the symbolism and iconography of each symbol. The works of Khurt (2009), Cox (2007), Watterson (1999) and the articles in Sasson were used as foundation references for Egyptian religion and culture, as a backdrop to the symbolism and iconography of each symbol.

Schwabe, et al (1982) and Gordon & Schwabe (2004) offer some interesting theories towards the origin and original symbolism of the *Ankh* as symbol. They contend that the *Ankh* had an anatomical origin in the four thoraic vertebrae found in bulls, and that the ancient Egyptians associated these four bones with the abstract concept of "life".

Other sources were used that helped clarify and fill in some details, as well as bringing opposing/differing viewpoints on some symbols for a complete picture. This is especially true of the sources on the *Wadjet Eye*, on which there is no clear single definition; see Darnell (1997), Bianchi (1985), Kavett & Kavett (1975) and Robin (1995).

Images (photographs and drawings) of primary sources showing the original Egyptian usage of the symbols were used from websites. These were found using a normal Google search for the items I was looking for. These websites can be found in the bibliography.

Some images of specific artefacts were requested from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (www.metmuseum.com) This site has an amazing feature where one can order any image of any item in their archive or on display free of charge in high resolution. One can even request that a photo be taken if they do not have what one wants. Other sites mentioned above operate under a Creative Commons licence and images are therefore free of copyright as long as the source is listed.

2.4 MODERN CONTEXT

Due to the fact that the internet is the primary source and medium for most modern culture (especially social and iconographic culture), this section's sources consists of a lot of websites and social media sites. These sources were also chosen because they best reflect the general trend and opinion of modern people, and are therefore primary sources of modern culture. This study is about perception; not necessarily how academics see the ancient world, but how modern people see it. To properly investigate this, the modern section of this study will have more non-academic primary sources than may perhaps be usual in a master's dissertation. However, these sources show how modern people perceive and understand/use ancient symbols, and are therefore at the core of the study.

However, modern culture had developed and had many ideologies and iconographies embedded in them during the Renaissance. This period was also covered, especially in terms of art iconography, using scholarly articles and works.

To this end, various iconographic studies and discussions were used to look at modern religious symbols such as the cross, nimbus and eye iconography. Interestingly enough, some of these studies and opinions are about 100 years old, dating from the earliest stages of scholarly enquiry, yet still valid or usable. In fact, older sources tend to go straight to the root Iconography and description, making them more valuable in some cases than modern works that tend to try to analyse and explain in cultural terms, instead of reporting on something, which has in itself more merit. However, modern studies were influenced by the point of view of older works, so these are used together to attempt to create a bigger picture.

2.4.1 The *Ankh*/Cross/*Tau* connection

The *ankh* and the traditional Christian cross are both of interest here as they seem to share some iconography and general shape. Initially I thought that the cross may be traced to the *Ankh* through the tau cross, which also shares a common shape with the cross and *ankh*. However these sources shed another light on the use of both the tau and the normal Latin cross, as well as their origins:

- Jewitt (1875)
- Healey (1977)

- Crumlish (1993)
- De Zwaan (1920)
- Harpur (2002)

The articles mentioned above trace the origins of the tau and Latin cross, and mention their uses. In some cases they were used at the same time as the *ankh* and in cases outside Egypt they were used before the *ankh* spread there. This was instrumental in changing the direction of the study.

These articles are confirmed in books by Brock (1879) and Dalrymple (2004), both also tracing the many crosses and their origins. Cox (2007) mentions the *ankh* as a possible pre-curser to the cross, if not in form then definitely in spirit. A study by Lythgoe (1908) in the Oasis of Kharga also shed some light on the subject, as well as making primary data available in the form of artefacts and images that contain the *ankh* in a Christian context. This context, together with sources on early Christianity (Figueras 2014 & Gundani & Jafta 2009), helped to explain how and why the Christians in Egypt used the *ankh* and cross together, while the official online Catholic Encyclopaedia at www.newadvent.org helped clarify the Latin Cross' iconography.

Primary sources in the form of photographs of codices and churches also helped to clarify the role of the *ankh* in the church in Egypt. The websites www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/ and www.copticchurch.net/, official websites of the church in Egypt, also shed light on the iconography and symbolism in the modern Coptic church.

2.4.2 The Nimbus and Sun-disk connection

This study started with the assumption that the Sun-Disk of ancient Egypt and the Sun-Disk/nimbus found in Christian religious art was iconographically linked. However, as with the *ankh* and Latin cross, this hypothesis fell flat in the face of the sources found. Tavenor-Perry (1907) and Ramsden (1941) both looked at the iconographic use and origins of the "sun-disk" in Christian art. Gietmann (1911) confirmed these studies in an article he wrote in "The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11" (www.newadvent.org), as part of the official history of the nimbus.

2.4.3 The *Wadjet Eye* and Eye symbols

Our study on the usage of the *Wadjet Eye* in modern culture showed two distinct and popular uses, the one as part of medical symbols and the other as part of "mystical eye" iconography.

2.4.3.1 ℞ symbol

The medical symbol for prescription, the ℞ symbol, is discussed by first Koenig (1939) and then again more recently by Ernest (1998) and Aronson (1999). These studies trace the origin of the symbol back to the ancient Egyptian *Wadjet Eye* and its use in the middle ages apothecarial traditions.

2.4.3.2 Eye Iconography

More abstractly, I looked into eye iconography in art, most notably the famous Renaissance artist and architect Leon Battista Alberti and abstract artist Fabrizio Clerici. These sources also deal a lot with iconographic analysis and techniques, which influenced the iconographic aspect of the study. Mystical connotations to ancient Egyptian concepts, especially of the eye, is a large part of the reason for this study and as such these sources go a long way to point that out. Alberti and Clerici were chosen specifically because they use the *Wadjet Eye* directly, including its mystical connotation to an all-seeing/knowing deity. Alberti himself links his usage and meaning of the symbol (and personal insignia based on the *Wadjet Eye*) to the "Eye of Horus" (Alberti 1485[3]).

Muratova (1977) and Emmer (1991) both discuss Clerici's work, and taken together with images (primary sources) of his own work, these sources offer valuable insight into his work and his motivation behind using the *Wadjet Eye* in abstract art.

Watkins (1960) and Schneider (1990) discuss Leon Battista Alberti, an architect, artist, writer and philosopher who lived from 1404-1472AD in Italy and was instrumental in modern architectural concepts developed in Renaissance Italy. Once again primary sources of his work, De re aedificatoria (1485) and images of his personal insignia shaped as a "winged eye", compliment the studies and literature to give us a better, fuller picture of him as artist and of his motivations.

2.4.4 Other connections and studies

In doing research on ancient symbols, one would invariably stumble upon the Free Mason organization. To study this angle, I acquired a copy of Gerald Massey's *A Book of the Beginnings* (1881) and Churchward's *Signs & Symbols of Primordial Man*, both standard masonic works on their view of ancient Egyptian symbols. However, due to the fact that the masons do not seem to use the *ankh*, sun-disk or *Wadjet Eye* in any recognizable form (especially not the *Wadjet Eye*!!!!), this direction of research only yielded a small amount of usable information for this particular study, though there are some interesting points for future research.

[3] Used a 1755 English translation, *The Architecture of Leon Batista in Ten Books. 1755. London* by Translation by Edward Owen available on Google's free book repository and academia.edu.

Another interesting study found, was the PhD by Packer (2012) titled *Influences of ancient Egypt on Architecture and Ornament in Scotland*. This study had quite a lot in common with my own, as Packer also looked at how ancient Egypt influenced and is represented in a modern cultural context. I borrowed some methodology from him, and some images and names of places that use ancient Egyptian symbols as part of the architecture. His reasoning as to why is also similar to my own (see the Introduction chapter).

2.5 WEBSITES (PRIMARY SOURCES)

Due to the nature of our modern culture, being in essence an online culture, websites form the majority of our sources in this chapter. Below are the main categories under which we searched for sources, information and images on the web. For a detailed discussion on the information found there, see Chapter 6, as these are considered to be primary sources and discussed in text.

2.5.1 Jewellery

As with the Ancient Egyptian symbols mentioned earlier, I did a google search for specific examples of the modern sale and usage of ancient Egyptian symbols in jewellery. Images are regarded as primary material, and discussed in detail in-text.

2.5.2 Popular Culture/Music

As with the Ancient Egyptian symbols mentioned earlier, I did a google search for specific instances of modern culture being influenced by ancient Egyptian symbols and concepts. Images are regarded as primary material, and discussed in detail in-text. You Tube had three “hits” in popular music videos alone.

2.5.3 Games and Movies

As computer games are of a more electronic nature, there are vast resources available on the web for each game. Of these, fan-sites are also important, as this is where gamers come together and discuss their experiences and feelings in a game. These websites were used as information references for the section on ancient Egypt in gaming. Being an avid gamer myself, most of the information is first-hand, and websites were used for extra information and screen-captures.

2.5.4 Architecture

In Architecture the internet is an amazing resource where one can generally get an image of any building in the world without having to go there. Oftentimes (and if one uses the right tools) these images are objective and unbiased and offer a cheap alternative to globe-hopping after a single image, or having to make do with sub-par images. Google map's Street View is also quite a useful tool in exploring the globe without actually being there, yet getting a ground/street-view perspective of a particular place. Here I used Google Street View for an image from the perspective I wanted of the previous home of the Bank of Scotland headquarters at number 3 Hope Street, Edinburgh. Many resources for the study of the renaissance and it's main thinkers are also available freely.

2.5.5 Pagans/modern use

As with everything else, the pagan societies also have a presence on the internet. The Pagan societies studies here are dedicated to ancient Egyptian religious customs in an effort to increase their spiritual experience. As I do not personally know anyone of this creed, nor knew enough about the societies to be able to visit, the internet was a major source of information and images on them.

2.5.6 Christianity

Once again the internet proved immensely useful in researching some Christian practices, as well as the Coptic Church and Archaeological finds associated with early Christianity an it's interaction with the *Ankh*.

Most other images not specified were retrieved from generic Google image searches. For instance, if I came across a reference to a particular mural/artefact, and the source didn't have an image or the image was too bad quality, I would use google image search to find the best images. These would preferably be from museum/research websites but in the Modern section specifically these images may also be on social platforms where posted images fall under a creative commons/wiki licence.

CHAPTER 3: ICONOGRAPHIC STUDIES

Abstract

This chapter introduces iconography, iconology, emic analysis and the methodology by which the study is done. Some iconographic/iconological studies are sampled and their take on the subject of symbolic analysis/comparison is discussed. Iconography and Iconology can be used as tools for the study and comparison of ancient Egyptian symbols to their modern counterparts. Communication studies and models such as the Stuart Hall model of communication are also useful to better understand the process by which symbols send a message. Erwin Panofsky's Iconology theories can be used together with "Emic Analysis" to better understand the sitz im leben of symbols and images.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Humans have always liked images, be these in the form of icons, paintings, symbols or even a natural view. Images and symbols in any form are also the most basic and simplest form of communication and take their meaning from two sources, the first source being the original artist/conceptualiser of the image, the second source being the person that views the image (Martin & Nakayama 2007:336-337). The original conceptualiser of the image may attach a specific meaning or message to the image, to convey to the viewer. In light of this, the second person needs to know the original meaning that the conceptualiser of the image meant for the image, otherwise the whole point of having an image in the first place is lost. This also ties in with communications theory, discussed below. To this end, standardised images are used to control and standardise the message so that both parties can clearly understand what is being communicated. These types of images are standard in a culture, meaning that everyone within that culture understands what is meant by a specific image within their culture. In this way, everyone in ancient Egypt knew, or at least had an idea, of what was being portrayed by the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*.

Each culture has its own images and meanings to these specific types of images. Some, such as sun-motifs, are almost universal and self-explanatory, and are diffused or spread to other neighbouring cultures easily. More "specialised", intricate images are much harder to

understand by other cultures, and therefore remain specific to its originating culture. Sometimes, however, these images may have such a huge impact on foreign cultures that they become important signs, such as signs of royalty, power, mysticism or the arcane, in these cultures. A good example of this is the royal double-headed eagle used in Germany, Russia and Austria as symbols of royal power. Originally, this was an ancient Mesopotamian, then later Hittite, symbol of divine power (Chariton 2011).

This communication "problem" in the images between cultures becomes compounded over time. This is especially the case when the images are used out of context, or in a variety of new contexts in a different culture. This is our modern "problem", where ancient Egyptian symbols are used outside of their original context, but also still within similar contexts.

The communication problem is also studied by the communication sciences in as far as it affects normal communication as well. Communication is seen to comprise of three parts namely the communicator, receiver and the medium. The communicator formulates a message to send through the medium to the receiver. This message is affected by the communicator's background, histories, cultural factors and experiences and the meaning that he or she wants to convey. This is known as encoding the message. The receiver then interprets the message according to their understanding which is influenced by their own background, histories, cultural factors and experiences, referred to as decoding the message. The medium through which the message is sent also contributes to the clarity and transfer of the message. Successful communication is generally seen as when the receiver understands about 90% of what the communicator intended. This is called the Stuart Hall encoding/decoding communication model, published by Stuart Hall in 1980 (Vermaak 2011, Martin & Nakayama 2007:336-337). In the same way, symbols become the encrypted "shorthand" form of a message or idea that the artist wants to convey.

When the intended recipient did not receive or understand the message, communication fails. This is what happens when we as modern day perceivers of ancient symbols do not attempt to understand the factors that influence the use of a symbol. In not understanding where a symbol comes from, we miss the original intended message, and communication therefore fails. An important aspect of this communication model is that the culture of the message (in our case the symbol) may be seen in the encoding/decoding process. If the parameters of the encoding can be known, the culture and real meaning of the message (symbol) can also be known. This is

why it is important to study the *sitz im leben*, or "setting and use in life" of a particular piece of a culture.

Iconography attempts to solve some of this communication problem by studying the signs and symbols of ancient cultures to gain a better understanding of the ancient context and communication in the ancient world. However, a normal analysis of the form and function of a symbol will only describe it, not explain nor study its "philosophy" and message.

To get behind the reason and reasoning behind a symbol, one has to look at images and symbols in their original context (or setting if available) to try and see what the artist was thinking when the symbol was used. This is also called Iconology, as it is the study of the underlying issues, motivation and "thinking" of the artist at the time of the image's creation (Panofsky 1955:3). In this regard, Iconography would be the study of the physical shapes and lines, whereas Iconology would refer to the abstract aspects, such as metaphorical setting and the artist's thoughts.

3.2 ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY

Iconography is defined as the analysis of an image or symbol, and its associated stories and allegories. This entails the recognition, classification and thematic analysis of images and symbols in any medium. In fact, some Iconographical studies can even be done solely on texts and the literary images therein. Angus Fletcher, amongst others, looked at the "Iconographies of Thought" in his article of the same name in Representations, No. 28, 1989. In the article Fletcher looks at the iconography of literature, the way in which things are portrayed, and how the story of the author is brought across. Ann Buckley looks at Music Iconography, and how symbols, images and concepts are portrayed in music and instruments, in an article in Music in Art, Vol. 23. These ways of looking at symbols can be applied to any form of symbol and symbolic usage.

Erwin Panofsky, in his works [4] on the subject, defined the study of "Iconography" as a combination of three different phases, namely Primary or Natural, Secondary or Conventional and Intrinsic Meaning or Content (Panofsky 1939:4-7).

[4] Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form' (1927), Studies in Iconology (1939) and Iconography and Iconology (1955)

The primary stage refers to the recognition of the general universally understood images, such as figures of people, flora and animals. This Panofsky described as a "Pre-Iconographic Description" of the subject, simply describing its style, form and imagery without offering any deeper analysis (Panofsky 1955:40).

The secondary stage refers to the understanding of the backstory or story that the image portrays, or the images that a story portrays. Panofsky describes this stage as an "Iconographical Analysis", where the forms and styles from stage one are analysed and fleshed out to understand the story of and around the subject being studied (Panofsky 1955:40). This stage is only possible for people with a knowledge of the subject matter, and is the root cause of the "communication problem" mentioned previously.

The last stage, namely the understanding of the intrinsic meaning or content, is defined by Panofsky as an "Iconological Interpretation", where the results of the previous stages are used to discover the "underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work" (Panofsky 1939:7 & Panofsky 1955:40) This final stage attempts to uncover the inner "layer" of an image; that which motivated the artist to create it, and what the artist's emotional, mental and perspective context for the image truly was.

This secondary stage may be enough if one is concerned with a purely stylistic or descriptive approach to an image. However, there is the danger of imposing one's own perceptions onto such a study. This is where the "Emic Analysis" comes in where one attempts to look at an image or imagery from the viewpoint of the original person, not "tainted" by modern perspective (Yanow 2014:9-14).

The term "emic" is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied." (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus[5] 2010) This ties in with Panofsky's definition of "iconology".

[5] This dictionary is bundled with the Encyclopædia Britannica 2010 software.

Panofsky defines “iconology” as a “method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis” (Panofsky 1995), as one synthesizes all the “raw material” at one’s disposal to try to reconstruct a context for the subject. This is different to building a context using an analysis of the subject and one’s own perspective. This ties Panofsky’s Iconology directly to an Emic Analysis, as it tries to see the subject from the perspective of the source, rather than from our own.

Since an “Emic Analysis” is concerned with how a culture interpreted itself as opposed to our modern interpretation, the last two stages that Panofsky highlights are of particular importance to the study of ancient symbols. In this current study of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*, these images need to be understood and interpreted in an ancient Egyptian context first, then a modern one. This means that we need to look at all the factors, myths and stories around a symbol in order to gauge its significance and original context.

3.3 STUDIES

Iconographic studies on ancient Egyptian symbols are, for the most part, done on individual pieces and follow general themes, such as the use of a certain symbol in a large variety of settings. These usually trace the origins or earliest use of a symbol to its latest use and would attempt to explain how it was viewed by the ancient peoples in various stages of its life as symbol (Budin 2006, as an example).

These studies have merit in their subject matter and relevant fields. However, in this work we are concerned with the perception of symbols, and what they are perceived to mean by ancient people and now in modern times by modern people. In this regard, comparisons between ancient Greek and modern cultures and cultural practices are more representative and complete.

Lambert (1993 & 1995) looked at how ancient Greek medical and sacrificial practices correspond to modern day medical practices based on the ancient Hippocratic oath and then draws it to local African, particularly Zulu, cultures. He used the same methodology as this study where a few cultural items, in this case certain medical prescriptions and practices, compare in different cultures. The advantage of using a few set cultural items to compare across two cultures is that one will always end up with a scenario where one’s study reads along the lines of “culture A sees apples as a red fruit, whereas culture B sees apples as a red danger and curse”. Using different

cultural items would still yield comparison, but it would also not show a clear comparison in thought about a specific item.

Panofsky concentrated on renaissance art and the symbolism in these images and so does many of his followers and critics, such as Paul Taylor, Roelof van Straten, Sir Ernst Gombrich, and more, concentrating on the usage/problems encountered specifically in European renaissance era art (Taylor 2008). His methods and theory are, however, in my opinion sound for a purely anthropological/cultural study of ancient images, as they are not era- or time-bound in their core ideology. Many scholars of ancient Egypt use the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead, Pyramid Texts and other funerary texts to look at how the ancient Egyptians saw and used their symbols and images. These texts are also the most complete and iconographically rich, making them perfect for studying the use and understanding of a symbol in ancient Egypt.

Te Velde (1986) indirectly used Panofsky's ideas without listing him as a source in his "Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols and Gods". In this article he looks at the symbolism of Hieroglyphs and concludes that they may be seen as "gods" of some sort. This he bases on various examples and concludes that the "hieroglyphic system is a practical script, but it is also a pictorial reproduction of the reality of the world of the Egyptians in some 700 images" (Te Velde 1986:65). Hieroglyphic signs were also seen to be living representations of the real world, and that what was written, became real. It is in light of this that one should look at the iconography of ancient Egypt.

Renate Van Dijk (2011) uses the same principle in her thesis on the Iconography of bulls, citing Othmar Keel's The Symbolism of the Biblical World (1997) where he says that Ancient near eastern art and images were intended to be "read" as messages and stories, not viewed as art in itself (Keel 1997:7 & Van Dijk 2011:5-6). This further illustrates the importance of that "other something", as Panofsky describes it, in images - the metaphorical and symbolical meaning behind the usage, placement and portrayal of a symbol or image, which is what Van Dijk studied in her work.

Iconographic studies alone do not always give a complete picture. Tobin (1988) takes a slightly different approach in comparing Greek religious thought to Egyptian thought. He looks at the complexity and abstractedness of the myths from both cultures, concluding that the Egyptians

were a lot more pragmatic and “realistic” in their approach to the divine, as compared to the intricate and sometimes convoluted stories of the Greek Pantheon.

The “emic” analysis of symbols in the Ancient Near East is especially important because of the thousands of years that separate our cultures. In this study we will use the “emic” iconology theory and practice, as laid out by Panofsky and as applicable to our own field.

3.4 CONCLUSION

“Iconographical” studies alone do not offer the in depth analysis of the motives and consciousness behind an image. In Ancient Near Eastern studies, the original images are thousands of years removed from our own culture and so we need to recreate the original context to completely understand the background of a symbol, and to better understand how ancient peoples saw it. This is achieved through an “Emic” Iconological study which synthesizes known facts and builds a context, as opposed to simply analysing the symbols.

These tools help scholars to accurately study the *sitz im leben* of ancient cultural symbols and iconography, and forms the backbone of the methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL SHIFT AND SPREAD

Abstract

In this chapter the mechanisms through which culture interact are looked at. Diffusion and Acculturation are the main methods of cultural exchange over long periods of time. Ancient Egyptian cultural elements can influence modern culture as a result of these phenomenon and did so through three "gateways": the Classical Civilizations, the Early Church in Alexandria and Modern Publications and Technology, especially the internet. Since there is very little actual literature on ancient Egyptian culture in modern culture, comparative studies between Classical Civilizations and modern culture can be used as guides to form a framework in which to study ancient cultural diffusion across time. The "disenchantment" of the modern secular world and the "enchantment" by ancient cultural artefacts are also explored in the light of our global culture. This goes to show how the ankh, sun-disk and Wadjet Eye came to be found and used in modern culture.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will look at cultural shift and spread – the ways in which cultural elements from one culture spreads to another. This is central to the study, as it provides the means and, possibly, the reason for why cultural interaction took place between the ancient Egyptian culture, which is quite distinctive, and the classical cultures. Cultural shift and spread generally happens through cultural diffusion and acculturation, and in this chapter we will examine these mechanisms. We will also look at how these mechanisms could cause ancient Egyptian cultural elements from seeping through to modern culture, and be spread by modern technology and literature. However, before we can work with cultural shift and mechanisms we need to define what culture is and which cultures we are talking about.

4.2 CULTURE

But what is "Culture"? Culture is defined as a set of rules, customs and artefacts that a group of people do and use, as a group, that sets them apart from other groups (Martin & Nakayama 2007:81). This culture can be affected by other cultures. Grounded in the very nature of culture, is the concept of a "Global Culture". Cultures interact with each other, subtly changing one another over time. This is an important facet of Culture that must be kept in mind - in effect, the earth has only one culture, and different sub categories of that one culture. Though it may seem like different, independent, unique cultures in each area, each culture is affected in some way or

another by all the others, directly or indirectly (Birken 1999). However, this effect cannot always be felt or seen without the benefit of hindsight or if one is actually looking for the links. Consider, for instance, how England and ancient Phoenicia are connected. At first glance this may seem like absolute nonsense. These two regions are thousands of kilometres apart, with virtually no links between them. Yet, England and the English language that developed during the Middle Ages (1300-1500AD) was very much affected by the Phoenician Culture that flourished between 1400 and 600BC, almost 3000 years and a world away. If one looks closely at history, one will come to realise that the Romans, who developed the "Latin" Alphabet on which, amongst others, the English Alphabet is based, received their learning from the Greeks, who, in turn got their Alphabet from the Phoenicians. Ergo, if it weren't for trade relations between Ancient Greeks and Phoenicians, the letters on this page would probably have looked much different. The processes that allow such cultural exchange and spread are called diffusion and acculturation, and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Diffusion and acculturation are part of a culture's "everyday life". In the ancient world, cultures were distinct. You knew an Egyptian from a Greek on sight. However, as the various cultures came into contact, through trade and political contact, certain elements "rubbed off" from one to another, usually both ways. This meant that, over time, only the strongest of cultural traits survived, and a shared culture was developed. Thus, whilst one would still recognise an Egyptian from a Greek, one would not necessarily be able to tell a Syrian, Phoenician, Israelite or Mesopotamian apart by sight alone, and only through a deeper inspection into smaller customs, language dialects and artefacts. Even in these smaller artefacts one would find cross-cultural elements, such as the many seal-rings/impressions found in Canaan with Egyptian symbolism on them, such as the *Ankh* and the Winged Sun-disk (Avigad 1978 & Vermeulen 2010). In our modern world, these cultural borders are so blurred that one can only guess at the general area whence a person came.

Through the "Western" humanitarian ideals of Equality, Understanding and Tolerance, it is now as acceptable to have ancient Egyptian, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern (Buddhist) and any other "interesting" souvenir from another culture in one's home, than it is natural to have one's own cultural artefacts and items on display. This, in turn, promotes "Global Culture" - a concept where the world shares culture across traditional boundaries.

The concepts of cultural change and interchange has long been studied, with most studies and works having been written between the 1940's and 1990's, and anthropological definitions grounded.

Before two cultures can be compared, and their interactions examined, one must define what exactly one means when referring to specific cultures. Our world is not an old *Sid Meier's Civilization*[6] game where the different cultures are pre-determined and simply occupy neutral space and are unaffected by the terrain or other cultures (Firaxis 2001 & 2005). In the real world cultures interact with each other and their surroundings, shaping them into what we can classify and recognise today. With regards to this, ancient Egypt and the Modern "West" are not the same kind of culture. Though they were influenced by the same factors, and had multiple interactions, the "Western" European culture had its roots in a much harsher more demanding climate, which called for harsher answers to life and its questions than the more relaxed middle Eastern attitude to life.

In this study "Western Culture" is taken as that culture that was developed in Europe from around 700 AD, and has had a long history of being divided into different, unique, sub-cultures that developed from regional tribes of proto-European peoples during a time when Egypt was at its prime (1400's BC). This culture was spread around the world almost 3000 years later as the European cultures struggled to assert themselves over each other during the Middle Ages (+-800-1300 AD), a trait that has caused the civilization as a whole to evolve and develop according to the "quickest route to riches/power" (Birken 1992 & Birken 1999).

Art and aesthetic values of architecture and visual arts were influenced by the Renaissance. This was a period from the late 13th Century AD onwards in which the relatively poor culture of the Middle Ages was revived with a "rebirth" (the meaning of "renaissance") in art, music and science. The period was characterized by the search for knowledge and expression and the Europeans

[6] *Sid Meier's Civilization* is a turn-based strategy game series developed by Firaxis Games in which one simulates the founding, growth and eventual domination of cultures amongst other computer or player controlled cultures. These cultures are set and cannot borrow cultural ideas from one another. The borders are therefore rigid, with the exception of religion, up to *Civilization IV*. *Civilization V* & *VI* has more intricate cultural interactions.

turned to ancient Greece for this rebirth, and in doing so came into contact with ancient Egyptian symbols and iconography.

Today it has become the dominant culture of the USA, Canada, most of Europe, Africa (predominantly South of the Sahara), Australia and South America. Though there are regional variants, people in these areas follow values derived from Christianity, and aspire to a standard of living imported and fabricated by the Europeans and the USA. It is this culture that is predominant in South Africa and to which we will point some of our research in this study.

This culture has also, in recent years, seen the rising of multiculturalism, in which regional and pre-Western cultures are revived, made relevant and/or incorporated into the local culture. This phenomenon has led it to slowly assimilate other modern cultures, such as Middle Eastern (the survivors and successors to the great Empires of the ANE), Eastern (Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Tibetan, Indochinese and more recently, Korean - after the "K-Pop explosion" of 2008-9) and Indigenous (regional cultures that existed before Europe spread its culture abroad, such as Native American and Aboriginal) cultures from around the world.

This pluralistic multicultural state of modern culture makes it hard to compare it to more "stagnant[7]" empire-based cultures, such as those found in ancient Egypt, the Levant and to the East, in ancient times. These empire-cultures were, at their peak, much more similar to the ones in the *Civilization* games where a culture at its peak is instantly recognizable and incorporates little core elements from other cultures (Firaxis 2001 & 2005). For instance, ancient Egypt never shared its political or religious ideologies with Mesopotamian Cultures such as the Assyrians and Babylonians. No Mesopotamian king ruled with such absolute stability as Egyptians had. Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Canaanite architecture are all unique in style, decorations and function. True, some iconographic and ideologies were exchanged, but never on the scale seen in Western culture.

Today it is entirely culturally acceptable for a person to practice one religion, such as Christianity (or have no religion), practice Yoga, a Hindu meditation rite, and wear an Egyptian *ankh* as

[7] In this sense, stagnant is used to show how radically opposite ancient empire-based cultures are to modern multicultural western culture. Ancient cultures and empires were far from stagnant.

jewellery. This level of culture-exchange/usurpation is unknown in the Ancient world. It is therefore hard to compare a "static" ancient culture to a dynamic multicultural one such as our Western one. One can almost argue that "modern culture" has passed into a "post cultural" state where the normal definition of "culture", i.e. that set of specific rules, customs and artefacts, becomes superfluous in the presence of so many traditionally different cultural traits in one accepted "culture". This is called Cultural Hybridity, and though it is mainly used for individual people or family units (Martin & Nakayama 2007:300), we can see it working in modern culture.

However, interestingly enough, it is exactly this dynamic multicultural acceptance that forms the reason for this research and caused the phenomenon known as "Egyptomania". Today people have the choice to follow their own paths inside "Western culture", and this is precisely why some people choose to wear and use ancient Egyptian symbols and incorporate them into their culture. Birken uses the Chaos theory to explain and make sense of this phenomenon (Birken 1999). Simply put, Western culture can undergo an infinite number of small and big changes because changing one small thing in one area has a ripple effect, however small, throughout the whole which has far-reaching effects. The multicultural and "free" state of Western culture means that it has infinitely more choices for its adherents than a closed culture, and makes it even more probable to accept and absorb other culture's traits, thus changing the culture with every choice made, and widening the cultural base of modern culture with each new addition.

This culture has also lost touch with the "mysteries" and "enchantments" of the natural and spiritual worlds, as Wordsworth writes:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
>
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
>
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;
>
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

Excerpt from The World Is Too Much With Us by William Wordsworth.

Lyons (2014) takes this up, quoting Max Weber's famous *"Entzauberung der Welt"* ("disenchantment of the world"). Modern western culture has become secular, scientific and materialistic. We no longer view the world or nature as magical, but as resources and objects to

use to an end. However, she also notes a trend to try to return to the enchantments of old citing other philosophers and writers (Max Weber, Jane Bennett and Walter Pater). Flaig (2003) also points out how modern society is spiralling down into materialism and forgetting their "enchanted" humanity, citing as Burckhardt and Nietzsche. This movement is noticeable in modern culture, specifically the rise in neo-Paganism in Europe with the *Asatru* pagan groups in Iceland having already re-built a druidic temple. (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31437973)

This also ties in with our study of ancient Egyptian symbols in the modern world, as people in the world look for enchantment and mystique, turning to ancient symbols such as ancient Egyptian ones and romanticising about the cultures to bring "enchantment" back into modern culture.

4.3 DIFFUSION AND ACCULTURATION

Cultures share ideas through diffusion and acculturation. Diffusion is the most common, though acculturation happens most often today. Diffusion is most generally defined as when something is spread or allowed to mix freely. In cultural change, this is exactly what happens when two or more cultures come into contact. People talk and ideas spread. Some people from a different culture would like the aspects of a culture, and adopt them, assimilating them into their own culture, thus changing and influencing their own culture.

Acculturation is a direct consequence of diffusion. Where diffusion refers to the gradual intermingling of culture, acculturation refers to the physical changes that happen when one culture adopts certain traits of another, or when a person is indoctrinated in a culture, "native" or foreign. This is aptly summed up by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits in their report (1935) on culture change (Redfield et al 1935:230):

"Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into direct and continuous contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. … Under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture-change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from diffusion, which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place

without the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation."

However, where diffusion is generally a peaceful process, where merchants, artisans, theologians and diplomats from different cultures mingle and share ideas, acculturation can be violent and oppressive too.

"Antagonistic Acculturation", as Devereux and Loeb (1942) puts it, is the reaction to culture change, or the active, deliberate acculturation practiced by one culture to dominate or change another. In this sense, acculturation may be described as the resistance and defence against transculturation, where a culture loses its own or original cultural identity to another culture through too much diffusion into and subsequent dilating of the culture (Taylor 1991). Through forcibly changing a rival culture to your own, you do not need to worry about their culture affecting your own. This may be seen in the various modern "wars of liberation" where the USA tries to forcibly impose democracy in areas that historically resisted this form of government in the interests of "preserving our way of life" as so many US presidents have said.

Antagonistic Acculturation is therefore the method by which a culture "fights", and may lead to physical wars, political rivalry and cultural rivalry where one culture tries to best another. In both its defensive and offensive role, Antagonistic Acculturation spawns an intense feeling of nationalism and nationalistic pride, with the focus laid on older, traditional values, or new, radical ones, in an attempt to protect its core value systems. The most recent example of large scale Antagonistic Acculturation may be seen in the Cold War between the capitalist USA and former communist USSR, where, due to cultural differences, and the fact that either culture was strong and desirable to citizens of both countries, a national rivalry developed. The USA and the former USSR competed on all fields to prove that their culture was in the end, the best. Cultural works and public programs were aimed at instilling a sense of nationalism and cultural fervour in opposition to the influences of the other culture.

This reaction, though more one sided, can be seen in post-Hyksos Egypt where the Theban Dynasty started a "re-Egyptianising" of Egypt after ousting the Hyksos invaders. Temples, statues and monuments in the traditional Egyptian styles were commissioned, purely Egyptian culture propagated and, ironically, any useful trait the Hyksos left behind was "Egyptianised". Ironically,

much of the weaponry we associate with Egypt, such as the use of battle-chariots with mounted bowmen, were brought to Egypt by the Hyksos (Faulkner 1953:41). Indeed, the founding and expansion of the Egyptian Empire under Thutmose I was as a direct result of the cultural threat that the Hyksos had posed to Egypt, and can be seen as an extreme preventive antagonistic acculturation-move to prevent something like the Hyksos occupation from ever happening again, and to keep Egyptian culture pure.

The Amarna-debacle is another good example of Egypt's resistance to change, as all of Akhenaten's liberal changes were reverted at his death, and a very traditionalist approach taken by the regents and priests to "right the wrongs" of the heretic pharaoh.

These antagonistic tendencies are a culture's natural reaction to cultural interaction. Linton (1940) describes the events that led up to this as that a group or culture will, when meeting a new group or culture, do one of two things: If they like what they see, they will generally "go through a lot of trouble" to assimilate favourable traits from the other culture. If their own culture is strong, and more desirable, they will despise the new group, close ranks and do everything to seem as unlike the new group as possible.

These basic tenets of culture change describe the ways in which cultural interaction takes place, and the sharing of traits and ideas. Of particular note is the diffusion and assimilation of the favourable traits from one strong culture into another culture, as this is the basic reason why the cultural exchange of symbols and physical artefacts happen.

The mediums through which this exchange takes place may vary significantly, though they all have one thing in common: human social interaction. In ancient times, trade, diplomatic missions and the cross loaning of artisans was the norm, especially during the period of relative peace and diplomacy from 1600-1300 BC. These spread the physical artefacts and techniques, and to some extent the knowledge, of a certain culture's physical attributes. Later on scholars and scribes would exchange ideas and concepts via the written word, as during the Hellenistic Era.

A good example of the spread of a concept is writing and the alphabet. The concept of writing could be independently arrived at by different cultures, but writing with an alphabet (characters denoting sounds rather than concepts and syllables) was diffused from Canaan. Phoenician traders spread this to other parts of the known world, most notably to the Aegean, where the

Greeks developed their alphabet from the Phoenician and, per extension, founded our own modern alphabet.

Another, important and widespread, interaction was warfare and conquest. Most notable of this type of interaction and culture change is the Assyrian and Babylonian practice of exiling a population and relocating them elsewhere. This prevented nationalist fervour from growing again and threatening rebellion against the central government. Culturally this meant that a culture was now spread over the traditional geographic area of another culture and thus thinned out, away from traditional cultural areas. In many cases, this causes the groups to adapt to local cultures, absorbing them and consolidating them with their own. Sometimes this new culture also influences the local culture. This can clearly be seen in Jewish culture after the exile, where the language changed to Aramaic, and their literature and customs had a definite Mesopotamian flavour.

However, the type of cultural interaction that we are most interested in here is ideological. The *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* symbols and their associated symbolisms weren't forced on the Greeks and Early Church. Rather, they accepted them.

We now turn to the three possible gateways through which ancient Egyptian culture has been diffused to our modern culture.

4.4 DIFFUSION GATEWAYS INTO MODERN CULTURE

Ancient Egyptian culture was diffused into our modern culture through three "gateways", namely Classical Civilizations, the Christian Church and modern publications. Through these gateways our culture was and is put into contact with ancient Egyptian culture.

4.4.1 CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS

Sometime between +-600 and 0 BC, the Greeks became culturally interested in Egypt, writing histories and stories about the land, culture and history of the region. Most notable of these is Herodotus (c. 440BC), whose histories are littered with interesting references about Egypt, anecdotes and gibberish. From his works, one can easily see the awe which the Greeks had of Egyptian culture as the origin of most things. According to some scholars, most notably Bernal in his *Black Athena*, this happened much earlier from 1600BC (Bernal 1987 & 1991).

Before 600BC, the Greeks seemed to have cultural and diplomatic interaction with the Egyptians. This is evident in many Tel-Amarna letters and cultural artefacts from Greek civilizations in Egypt. To what extent this early interaction affected either culture is not really known, as no solid link between later Greek thought and ancient Egypt has been discovered. This subject has been thoroughly debated by Martin Bernal (1987 & 1991) and his many critics, but forms a mere stepping stone for these symbols to our own culture, in that it proves that Greece has a longstanding cultural relationship with ancient Egypt. Bernal's other theories, i.e. that ancient Greek cultures were fundamentally influenced by ancient Egypt long before the rise of Greek "scholarship" (i.e. Herodotus and Pliny) and before the conquests of Alexander, though of interest, has neither the physical evidence nor the weight to change anything in this present study.

What we are interested in, however, is the assimilation of ancient Egyptian cults and symbols into the Hellenistic and Roman cultures, and the assimilation of Egyptian symbols with them. From around 300 BC onwards, the Hellenistic city-states and later, Romans, adopted various Egyptian cultural symbols and artefacts. These traits are not found in Greece and Rome before the Hellenistic expansion under Alexander (332 BC) and the opening up of Egypt under Julius Caesar (56 BC) and later Augustus. Most notable of these was the worship of Isis, Horus (as Horus Harpocrates) and Osiris (in order of importance), the usage of the *ankh* pictograph as a part of "arcane" knowledge and life, the integration of the Sun-disk and the use of the *Wadjet Eye* (as part of its association with Horus) (Kákosy 1995 and Whitehouse 1995). These then came to our modern culture through cultural assimilation and the Renaissance study of the classical world.

When the during the Renaissance (from the 13th Century onwards), artists and scholars looked to the Greek civilization for wisdom and started to examine their surviving manuscripts and buildings. This brought them into contact with the bits and pieces of ancient Egyptian culture that the Greeks had recorded. This, in turn, led to great interest in the "mystical" land of ancient Egypt.

Knappert argues in his paper (1995) that the spiritual origin of modern European-based culture lies in ancient Greek philosophy. It was here where the first truly scientific-minded philosophers (that we know of to date) started to question why the world was as it is, and questioned the *status quo* of gods controlling society and natural forces. He argues, and shows quite convincingly,

that the "European mentality" of freedom and enquiry have their foundations in: "*One early morning a Greek philosopher woke up and saw the sun rise. He said to himself:* Thaumazo*: I wonder!*" (Knappert 1995:39) as he humorously puts it.

Interestingly enough, this philosophical and "scientific" tradition of investigation and enquiry moved to Alexandria in Egypt soon after Alexander's conquests.

4.4.2 CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Christian church's main training centre was in Alexandria during its early stages (from 100 to about 400 AD) (Gundani & Jafta 2009:85-86, Encyclopaedia Britannica 2010 "Alexandria, School of", "Alexandria"). This was because since Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt in 332 BC, and his founding of Alexandria in the Nile Delta, Alexandria became one of the capitals of the Hellenic world, in some respects even greater than Athens itself. This was because with his conquest, Alexander opened up the "Mysterious" land of Egypt to Hellenic culture, and with it all the wisdom, perceived and real, of the Egyptian priests. This was embodied in Alexandria where Greece met Egypt, and the Temple of Serapis, Great Library, Mouseion and other centres of learning were built and maintained with this ideal of the confluence of two great cultures in mind. As its status of learned centre of the Hellenistic world, it also became home of the first Christian Catechetical School and home or alma mater of most of the Apostolic Fathers of the Church, including Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Saint Anthony (who founded Monastism) and many more (Gundani & Jafta 2009:87-90; Figueras 2014).

Alexandria was also home to many philosophers and scholars, such as Euclid, Archimedes, Plotinus the philosopher, Ptolemy and Eratosthene. Neo Platonism also had its headquarters here and was assimilated into Christian theology by Origen (Gundani & Jafta 2009: 86; Figueras 2014:70). What this means for our own study is that if any Egyptian elements were diffused to the church, Alexandria would have been the prime area for this to happen. And happen it did. The Trinity, Cross, veneration of Mary/Madonna, Madonna and Child imagery and some core concepts about resurrection and the afterlife are all thought to have come from Egypt through the school in Alexandria. These instances will be explained and expanded on in Chapter 7, though only the symbols of the Cross/*ankh* will be studied as this is the direction of our study.

4.4.3 MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLICATION

With the popularisation of the Internet in the late 1990's, more people have access to more information than ever before. The Ancient Near East, and Egypt specifically, is well represented online. Each department and institute that studies the area has a website and publishes their finds and interesting news there, and in newspapers, for the general public. This publication of academia for the general public goes back to the late 1800's when popular men's magazines would publish scholarly and laymen's opinions on certain topics. These, of course, led to the development of academic journals and the frequent publication of these studies. These presented the Ancient Near East as an area full of riches, mysterious ancient cultures and ruins. A popular picture only now being eradicated by the rise of terrorism and the new Islamic State.

A search of any Egyptian keyword such as "pyramids, *ankh*, mummy, etc." will always yield a multitude of results, and results from all flavours of society. Searching a god's name or specific symbol will, when using the normal Google search engine (as opposed to the demarcated Google Scholar), yield hundreds of results of links to discussion forums, art blogs and fringe sites where the gods are discussed and seen in terms of modern concepts. Modern art and computer generated graphics with Egyptian themes abound, and in some cases, these artists endeavour to capture the abstract ideology and idea of the gods in their images. The images below are typical examples of how Horus and Seth have become popular amongst artists and developed into abstract techno-mythical characters.

Many "pagan" societies and followers of these ideas also have their own websites where ancient Egypt and ancient Egyptian culture is promulgated, though slightly twisted into a new religion or "conspiracy" ideology, such as that the Egyptians were actually instructed by or were aliens.

Some of these sites are:

www.ancientegypt.co.uk/ (run by the British museum)

discoveringegypt.com/ (non-peer reviewed popular informative site)

www.crystalinks.com/ (one of the ever present metaphysical and astrological websites that spout true facts about ancient Egypt mixed in with an unhealthy dose of Woodstock-era inspired

metaphysics and cosmology that seek to use ancient Egypt as a stepping stone into the World of Weird[8])

www.astrologycircle.com/ (see above)

Tumblr, Flickr and DashBurst (social blogging platforms that has many lay history buffs making up theories or reposting real scholarly articles and discussing them)

www.deviantart.com (an art sharing site where modern artists post many pictures of how they conceptualise ancient Egyptian Gods)

[8] "World of Weird" being my own term for the theories and beliefs that are propagated on sites such as these that have no founding in reality, logic or science and usually try to show any real facts as being manipulated by "Alien-controlled Governments and Institutions".

Figure 4.1: Modern "Techno" styled Horus and Anubis by Jamie Sapp, uploaded by Cocoyoh (https://www.flickr.com/photos/cocoyoh/4693416227/in/album-72157624134993373/) These images are the base art for the tattoos in 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Egyptian Gods Horus And Anubis Black Grey Tattoos by Jamie Sapp (found on Pintrest https://za.pinterest.com/pin/303007881152473326/)

Figure 4.3: Modern depiction of Seth and Horus fighting by Ryman, posted on Flickr by Brandon del Rosario (https://www.flickr.com/photos/tapesandcrates/5959950104/).

This list and images are not nearly exhaustive but only serves to show the extent and affect that ancient Egypt has on the minds of modern artists. These, of course, affect the rest of the population that use these sites or do lay-research without access to properly peer-reviewed works.

National Geographic (the publication) also plays a significant role in introducing the subject of ancient Egypt to the world, as does most other educational publications such as the Encyclopaedia Britannica and The Learning Company/Dorling-Kindersley (publishers of most educational books for pre-school children). Television Channels such as The History Channel and Discovery Channel feature regular shows about history and ancient Egypt specifically, though not all of these are peer-reviewed, such as the popular "Ancient Aliens" series (www.history.com/shows/ancient-aliens/articles/ancient-alien-theory).

All of these sources serve to make people more aware of ancient Egypt, and to make ancient Egyptian symbols and ideas more acceptable and relatable to them. Through these we can clearly see how Western culture is being acculturated by ancient cultures, through our own making. Television shows and references in popular culture solidify any concept in the minds of most

people, making it a definite part of the culture and ancient Egypt is by far the most popular of the ancient civilizations.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In dealing with “culture”, we are dealing with something that is dynamic and “alive”. These rules, customs and artefacts that sets a group apart from other groups is a continually growing and evolving system that incorporates and reacts to other cultures. This is how, through diffusion and acculturation, it is quite conceivable that a powerful culture such as ancient Egypt can influence cultures that are far removed from it by both time and geography.

We can see evidence of this in Classical Culture and Christianity, the two areas that were most affected by ancient Egypt and also the areas that most affected modern culture. Through these two gateways, ancient Egyptian culture diffused into the collective memory of European culture, which in turn became the backbone of modern culture.

Through the renaissance and its fixation on classical learning, the concepts of ancient Egypt came to modern secular thinking and art. Modern technology such as the internet and global inter-connectedness (globalization) helps spread ideas all over the globe, thus people across the world can know about ancient Egyptian symbols and iconography. These symbols and concepts seem to fill a need for mysticism and “enchantment” that is otherwise being lost in our modern global materialistic culture.

CHAPTER 5: THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

Abstract

In this chapter, the original usage, meaning and origins of the ankh, Sun-disk and Wadjet Eye are discussed to be used as a "sounding board" against which to measure the modern usage of these symbols. This is done by examining the form, origins and original usage (and therefore meanings) of the original ancient Egyptian symbols. In each case, the original context of the symbols can be discerned and used in the comparison with the modern usage in the following chapters. The ankh is seen to encompass the abstract concept of "life-force" and have a physiological bovine origin. The sun disk has a naturalistic origin with a protective connotation. Finally, the Wadjet Eye is seen to be as abstract as the ankh with meanings that span many different aspects and areas of ancient Egyptian religion, though originating humbly in the swamps of Buto.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will examine the original ancient Egyptian usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*. This will be used as a sounding board against which to test the modern usage of these symbols that we will examine in Chapter 6.

It is important to take note of how a symbol has changed through its interaction with another culture before assessing its influence and symbolism in its "new" usage. In assessing the impact that the use of ancient Egyptian symbols has on modern culture, on needs to have a sounding board against which to gauge whether a symbol is, in fact, still used in its original context. The danger is that the symbol(ism) can become so diffused in modern culture that it is no longer Egyptian. To use the *ankh* as example:

In many modern games[9] , the ancient Egyptians are represented by the symbol of the *ankh* as a national emblem or flag, usually a black *ankh* on a yellow background. Before assessing this, or drawing any conclusions about how the game developers sees ancient Egypt and the *ankh*, one must look at what the original artists and users of the *ankh* thought of the symbol.

[9] See Chapter 4, the section on Video Games

If it is found that the ancient or original usage does not support this modern usage, it can be inferred that the modern usage is a non-Egyptian innovation that, in this case, has been re-applied to the original ancient Egyptian culture. This makes it harder to identify the source, and this could only be seen when compared to the ancient Egyptian usage. Furthermore, if it is found that the ancient Egyptians did, in fact, use the *ankh* as national symbol, this would represent a modern continuation of an ancient tradition.

In this study, we will look at exactly this relationship between the ancient and the modern usage of ancient Egyptian symbols and how they might have changed, or not. To find such a sounding board, we will examine the ancient Egyptian usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* using primary and secondary sources in this chapter.

It is, however, important to note that what we know of Egypt is the very tip of a very large iceberg and that an absolute answer to many of the questions posed here may not be possible in its entirety. As Alan Gardiner wrote: "It must never be forgotten that we are dealing with a civilization thousands of years old and one of which only tiny remnants have survived. What is proudly advertised as Egyptian history is merely a collection of rags and tatters." (Gardiner 1964:56) Though much has changed since 1964 in the field of Egyptology, we are still very far from understanding the complete *sitz im lieben* of the ancient Egyptian, especially what the underlying causes and contexts were for their use of certain symbols.

In fact, whilst one would be tempted to see ancient Egyptian symbols as mystical representations in their cosmos, this extract from Tobin (1988) shows that there is enough room for an alternative argument: "*If, therefore, we interpret Egyptian religion as having its main basis in the* [practical] *cult, we must, nevertheless, consider also the mythic symbols of which that cult is the expression, for it is in these mythic symbols that the basic spiritual and theological values of Egyptian religion are to be found.*" (Tobin 1988:170) This practicality in ancient Egyptian religion can be found in the many re-enactments of Ra or another major deity overcoming evil that the pharaoh and priests had to perform every year, as expression of their religion and the world around them. I tend to agree with Tobin, that the symbols of the ancient Egyptian religion were very practical in there use and application and therefore had origins which were firmly grounded in some physical phenomenon, rather than abstract ideology.

In line with the Iconological Emic Analysis we discussed earlier, we will now examine each of the three ancient Egyptian symbols in terms of shape, ancient Egyptian meanings, usage and origins. This will help to reconstruct the background and reasoning behind the symbols. This is essential for a real comparison between ancient and modern usage, as without understanding why these symbols appeared in Egypt, we cannot see how the ancient Egyptians understood them nor what were meant by them. If we don't understand the images through their eyes, we will end up interpreting them from a modern point of view, which is exactly what we are comparing them against, and we will end up comparing our perspective of ancient Egypt against our modern perspective of ancient Egypt.

5.2 THE *ANKH*

Figure 5.1: The basic form of the ankh (Encarta Encyclopaedia 2004 Software Edition)

The *ankh* ('nkh in ancient Egyptian), or *crux ansata*[10] (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2010 "*ankh*"), has been associated with Egypt for almost all of its existence. No other Egyptian, or Near Eastern, symbol carries with it all the mystique, symbolism and promise of "Eastern Adventure" (to borrow from 19th century tourist brochures) that the *ankh* does. Gods were seen extending the symbol towards Egyptian kings. Kings extended the *ankh* towards their loved ones and loyal servants, or just carried it around. The *ankh* seems to be the essence of Egyptian life, and the gods and kings of ancient Egypt liked to think that they held and controlled the very essence of this life. However, the true meaning is, ironically, obscured by the fact that the symbol was used so much and in so many diverse settings and possibilities of contexts.

[10] Latin for "handle-shaped cross"

5.2.1 Form

In design the *ankh* looks like a T with an oval on it, or a cross with a handle, which is exactly how the Romans saw it, calling it "handle-shaped cross" or Crux Ansata Figure 5.1 above shows it in its truest form, though sometimes it does appear with arms or other appendages. The symbols closest to it are the *shen* ring and a *Tau Cross*, though neither share its iconography (see later).

5.2.2 Origins

The exact origins of the *ankh* symbol seem to remain a mystery. Being such an abstract and intangible concept, one exact origin for it is difficult to pin down. Various origins have been put forth by scholars.

E.A. Wallis Budge and Wolfhardt Westendorf (1904) postulated that the symbol was part of the knot of Isis imagery and is a symbolic belt buckle, holding everything together.

Sir Alan Gardiner, in his Egyptian Grammar (1927), states that the *ankh* is a tie or a sandal strap, and also a symbol of life. However, in the very next entry he assigns the *ankh*'s attributes to the *tyet* or "Knot of Isis". Other opinions all circled the same "knot" theory with Schaefer (1932) calling it a sash, girdle or magic knot that, together with the *tyet*, forms the iconography of the "Sacred Knot Symbol". These theories were developed in the early days of Egyptology and were not well thought through, since they have no correlation to any finds in Egypt.

Flinders Petrie (1902) noticed that in the New Kingdom the Double Axe was used interchangeably with the *ankh* in some cases, such as tombs at Abydos. This was taken up by Conrad (1957) who cited some finds in the rest of the ANE, such as Cyprus, and Cook (1914) and Waites (1923), citing Old and Middle Kingdom references to an order of priests named after the double axe. However, since it is known that the double axe is an Ancient Near Eastern symbol for fertility, especially associated with the weather gods, this cannot be of ancient Egyptian origin, as ancient Egypt didn't have a large weather god cult. This is due to the fact that Egypt drew its water from the Nile river and did not need nor know rainfall as part of their agricultural cycle, something which is associated heavily with weather gods from the rest of the ANE.

However, none of these hypothesis have hard facts grounding them to artefacts in Egypt itself. They are valid theories that describe single artefacts or uses, not all the evidence on the ground. The *ankh* is too complex a symbol to have only one such origin, as we have seen earlier on.

In 1982 Schwabe, Adams and Hodge postulated "An anatomical origin for *ankh*" (sic) in an article of the same name in which they explained, in short, how they believed the *ankh* to be an anatomical feature of a bull. Gordon and Schwabe published the complete study in their book The Quick and the Dead (2004), showing that the *ankh*, *djed* and *was* symbols could possibly stem from the anatomical features inherent in the spines of bulls. Their work explains how there is evidence that ancient Egypt was a very strong cattle-based culture (this is supported by Budge (1904) where he goes into detail about the importance of bulls to the pharaohs). As such, the early priests would have been familiar with a bull's anatomy and spine. The bull's "life-giving organ", the penis, was attached to the spine, and therefore the spine was where the semen came from, and the marrow in the spine was filled with life-force, according to ancient Egyptian thinking (Schwabe, et al 1982:445-446, Gordon & Schwabe 2004:99-103). Furthermore, the Egyptians noticed that even though their sacrificed bull was dead, the muscles of the shoulders and pectoral still moved as if it were alive. Today we know this is as a result of certain enzymes and nerve-responses that cause the muscles to jerk, called irritability. To the ancient Egyptians, this had to have been a part of a secret "life force" that was inherent in the chest of an animal. The priests seemed to first cut off the "sacred forelimb" of the sacrificial bull, and there discovered the muscles twitching and under that the four thoracic vertebrae (Gordon & Schwabe 2004:74). This vertebra looks a lot like an *ankh* (see Figure 5.2 below), and it is not far-fetched to conclude that the priests associated these uniquely shaped vertebrae with this "magical" phenomenon of muscles twitching. They go on to note that a bull's sacrum (to which is attached the penis and tail) and three attached vertebra look exactly like a *djed* pillar, and with an attached *was* sceptre. This pillar and sceptre is an exact "schematic" of a bull's spine and attached penis as viewed from above. (Gordon & Schwabe 2004:74) However, this is beyond the scope of this study, though interesting nonetheless.

Though taking some leaps from the tail to the thorax of a bull, Schwabe and Gordon's theory of a bull's thoracic vertebra being the origin of the *ankh* is quite satisfactory and has been well received and reviewed (Harer 2010[11]). It is a sound theory and it does clear up a lot of

[11] Surprisingly, this is the only academic review on the book I could find.

iconographic questions concerning the origin of the *ankh*, *was* sceptre and *djed* pillar. The various theories surrounding the origin and meaning of the *ankh* will be discussed later on.

Figure 5.2: A bull's thoracic vertebra, showing its similarity to an ankh (from Gordon & Schwabe 2004:105).

5.2.3 Meanings and usage

The meaning and usage of any symbol is interlinked, and hence we will discuss these two aspects together here. With the *ankh*, this is all the more necessary, as the usage of the *ankh* in ancient Egypt will shed light on the meaning.

Because of its multi-faceted, diverse and mysterious meanings and usages, scholars have no clear and unified consensus as to what exactly the *ankh* stood for. Simon Cox (2007) summarises the main theories:

- That the ancient Egyptian word *nkh*, meaning sandal strap, is close enough to *ankh* that it may be related. The shape of the *ankh* symbol may also denote a sandal strap (Alan Gardiner).
- That it is an abstract icon for a human being and, per extension, human life essence and/or the resurrected perfect body of *ba* and *ka* united.
- That the loop represents the rising/setting sun, the crossbar the horizon and the vertical line the path of the sun or the Nile. This may be seen at Tel Amarna where a certain crevice forms such an image as the sun rises to the East of the city (see below).
- That it is a simplified *tyet* symbol, or associated with it (E. A. Wallis Budge & Wolfhart Westendorf).
- That it is the key to the afterlife.
- That it resembles a penis sheath (worn by the ancient Egyptians) and as such has fertility connotations.
- That it is the physical manifestation of the Royal Cartouche in which all royal names are written.

Cox goes on to state that the *ankh* may also be a representation of sexual union, with the loop representing the female genitals and Isis, and the cross below representing the male genitals and Osiris, as first postulated in 1869 by Thomas Inman. The fact that many gods are seen carrying or using it in some way indicates that the *ankh* represents something abstract, yet almost tangible, such as immortality or the very essence of life - the life-force that creates and makes life and resurrection possible. This would explain why the symbol is so closely associated with the gods and life/fertility/resurrection motifs.

As a language character, the *ankh* means “life”, in its many senses (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2010 “*ankh*”). This is the most common and understood motif for the *ankh*. However, the same symbol may also denote a sandal strap, which shows that there is more than one meaning and aspect to the *ankh*.

The Amarna period is rich in its iconographic symbolism and stand out because on these reliefs the *ankh* and the Sun-Disk are some of the only religious motifs from the pre-Amarna period to have been used. Indeed, the *ankh* was almost over-used at Amarna, with the Aten's rays extending hands holding the *ankh* towards the nostrils of Akhenaten and whoever else is important in the picture, so it's a good place to start looking at how the *ankh* was used originally (Shaw 1994, the reliefs are catalogued in Roeder, *Amarna Reliefs aus Hermolpolis* 1969, as well as others). The figure on the next page shows a segment of balustrade Cairo JE 87300, which shows Akhenaten, his queen Nefertiti and an unknown smaller figure offering to the Aten sun-disk. This is part of extensive Amarna art, showing how the *ankh* is used in the text as a character, as a "gift" from the Aten to Akhenaten and Nefertiti, and as an offering from the lower left figure upwards. Furthermore, the Aten has an *ankh* dangling from its bottom. The overall idea seems to be that the Aten is the source of all *ankh* (life, and whatever else the *ankh* may stand for). It is also of significance that the *ankh* is attached to each of the cartouches shown. This clearly illustrates the many different usages and contexts in which one may find the *ankh*, and also that the *ankh* is the representation of much more than merely "life". It seems to embody the abstract idea of a "life force", that unseen, yet tangible force that creates and makes possible the very essence of life. This is supported by E.A. Wallis Budge's *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, which gives the meaning of the character as "to live, to live upon, life" (Budge 1920:124).

The orientation and positioning of the *ankh* is also important, as there seems to be a difference in how the *ankh* is presented.

Figure 5.3: Detail of balustrade Cairo JE 87300, after Shaw 1994.

Gods that hold or carry the *ankh* seem to do so from the loop or handle, unless presenting it towards someone. If the *ankh* is presented, as in the example from Amarna, the loop seems to be pointing towards whoever the *ankh* is applied to.

Figure 5.4: A figure holding the ankh by its "handle"

Figure 5.4 on the left is from the Temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el Bahari (from the Ancient Art blog, Tumbler). This is the typical way in which the *ankh* is held by a figure in an image, when the *ankh* is associated with that figure and not using it (Bianchi 1995).

If the *ankh* is being presented, it seems as if the hands do not hold the *ankh* as if it's a physical attribute that is passed down from the deity to the blessed. Rather, it seems that "*ankh*", as noun, is being passed from the deity to the person. This is borne out by the fact that the gods or sunrays never hold the *ankh* as shown above when holding it out towards a person or other deity. The attitude is

Figure 5.5: Isis holding an ankh towards the Seti I from his temple at Abydos (http://web0.memphis.edu/hypostyle/interior_wall.htm)

always a “palm out” one, with the *ankh* symbol seemingly “passing” from the deity to the subject of the image, as shown by the figure above (Figure 5.5) Notice how the *ankh* seems to pass from Isis to Sety I. In contrast, Nekhbet, above Sety, seems to hold the *ankh* attached to a *shen* ring, reading “eternal life”. Compare this with the way in which the *ankh* is held in Figure 5.4. Furthermore, this understanding of the meaning and iconographic context of the *ankh* is in line with its more mystical/intangible attributes, such as its association with the *djed* and *was* symbols. Such an *ankh*/*Djed*/*Was* “pillar” can be seen to the left of Isis’ head in Figure 5.5 above. The deities bless the subject with the *ankh* “life-force”, as opposed to the traditional “giving him life” interpretation. It is a small, but necessary shift in focus, if one is to understand the *ankh* and its iconography in full, and not just as a symbol of “life”. One can also see a small figure of Ma’at (the personification of Order) in the left cartouche, who seems to be closely associated with the *ankh*, as she is often seen with it on her lap. This ties together “order” and “life” in its most basic forms in Egyptian Iconography, which is an interesting point.

The *ankh* as complex symbol is typified in its incorporation, together with the *was* and *djed* symbols (meaning dominion and stability, respectively), in the god Ptah’s sceptre, as seen in Figure 5.6 (Pinch 2002:181). Ptah was the creator god of Memphis, and also patron-god to craftsmen and artists - every creative aspect of society. His cult was therefore very mystical, and this explains how these three symbols come to form his sceptre, since as creator deity according to the Memphite ideology, he held life, stability and dominion (the three tenets of Egyptian culture), and therefore all power as creative force, in it. An interesting point touched on by Te Velde (1986) is

Figure 5.6: Sety I adoring Ptah in a mural from the temple in Abydos

that in a religious text, the *ankh* and the *was* sceptre are called the father and mother, respectively, of *djed* (Te Velde 1986:66). The literal meaning would read as "the life-force and dominion give birth to stability", which is true in a political-philosophical sense, as a strong government that spreads "life" is a good recipe for stability. Philosophically too, this statement has merit, as in ancient Egypt dominion was practiced by the central government, and the life-force (*ankh*) "presented" by the gods to the important officials. To an ancient mind, this would spell out clearly why Egypt had such long periods of relative security. As masters of the arcane and abstract, the Memphite priests of Ptah captured this powerful imagery in the god's sceptre. Another interpretation of the origin of the sceptre of Ptah is that it represents a bull's spine, as discussed in "Origins" above (Gordon & Schwabe 2004).

The complexity and multi-tiered symbolism of the *ankh* is further shown by its other uses in the art and crafts of ancient Egypt. Mirrors were cast in the general form of the *ankh*, and the Egyptian word for mirror seems to have been "'nkh" as well (Kozloff 1984:274). This shows that the *ankh* was associated with one's "life-image": the image of the person looking in the mirror. To ancient peoples, a mirror was something rare, as one had to polish a metal or stone hard and long before one could see a rough reflection (Bianchi 1985:10). Water was the best kind of "mirror", and "dish mirrors" have been found where the mirror is made of a dark substance, such as slate stone, and then filled with water. The dark container would function like the backing of a modern mirror, and prohibit light from reflecting from behind the top film of water. The resulting image would be relatively clear, depending on backlight, and realistic (Kozloff 1984:274). To an ancient Egyptian, the resulting image of oneself would have a magical quality, and since it was "an animated picture" of oneself, it had to be one's *ka* (spirit) or life force. This connotation with the *ankh* is therefore quite clear.

Figure 5.7 shows such a dish in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is a stone-carved dish in the form of an *ankh*, with *ka* hands holding it from above. Opinions differ as to its exact usage, with the official description being that it is "a libation bowl" that spells out "life to your spirit" when a liquid is poured from it. Ostensibly, this dish would be used to "pour out" a blessing on a person.

Figure 5.7: Slate stone "libation dish" from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/543866)

Arielle Kozloff (1984) argues that it could be a mirror, and in the light of the fact that the *ankh* and a mirror share a connection, I tend to agree with her. James Romano (1995) is of the opinion that it is a "toilet dish". Considering its powerful symbolism, however, I do not think that this is likely, as I cannot see how the ancient Egyptians would use something as powerful as the *ankh* to do their business in. Gordon and Schwabe (2004) note that as the *ankh* symbol is life (and associated with the bull's spine and semen/life giving forces, see "Origin of the *ankh*" above) , this could have been a libation bowl for the pouring of "life giving fluids", such as water, semen or milk (Gordon & Schwabe 2004:102).

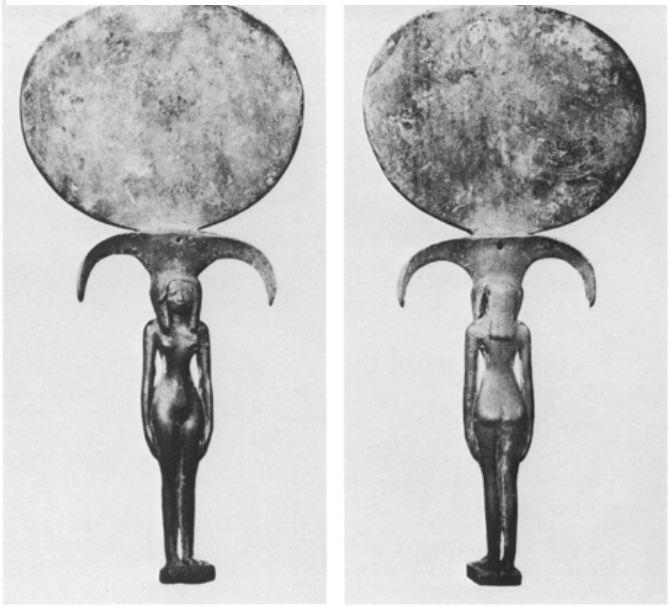


Figure 5.8: Copper mirrors (taken from the Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Kozloff 1984)

Later, copper mirrors were also in an *ankh*-like form and these represent the most common types of mirrors found in ancient Egypt (Scott 1973, Kozloff 1984). Figure 5.8 to the left shows a 15th century BC copper mirror. The link and relationship between the *ankh* and a mirror is also illustrated by the mirror case found in Tut*ankh*amen's tomb, shown below.

Figure 5.9: Mirror case from Tutankhamen's tomb (artmirrorsart.wordpress.com).

The mirror is also a shared symbol, since the disc is also associated with the Sun-Disk and the *Wadjet Eye* as well (Bianchi 1985). This clearly illustrates the pluralistic view that the Egyptians had of the world, where any symbol could be associated with a number of meanings and mythical devices (Bianchi 1985). This is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

Another interesting usage of the *ankh* is in abstract images and motifs where the *ankh* is shown with human arms doing something or holding something. This ties in with the idea of the *ankh* being a representation of a person's life-force. Images like these can be seen in the reliefs of the Sed-Fesitival, where the "*ankh*-men" carry various standards and banners. The Sed-Festival being the festival where the king "rejuvenated" his reign, the presence of the *ankh* is quite expected (Uphill 1965:376). This personification of the *ankh* is also seen in the smaller details of reliefs and paintings in monuments, temples, tombs and mummies (see Henettawy's mummy board and coffin cover in the next section on the Sun-Disk, Figure 5.12 and Figure 5.13). Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri contains many small *ankh*-persons on the balustrade bottoms that hold up her cartouches. Many tombs and scenes from the *du'at* contain these little personifications, usually doing something like holding up a banner or offering.

The *ankh* was also extremely popular as a magical amulet, worn as a necklace, charm or other jewellery for protection. These amulets were also used to adorn corpses, and, in the case of the *ankh*, this granted the deceased eternal life in the netherworld (Hornung 1995:1723-1725). Its usage can be traced to other parts of the Near East, such as Canaan right into Hellenistic times (Sousa 2007). Three Seals from Canaan, The Seal of Heddai, The Seal of Yasda' and The Seal of Miksap all contain the *ankh* in the midst of traditional Canaanite styles and engravings. Dating between 700 and 600 BC, these are clearly a Canaanite adaption of Egyptian Styles, with one,

The Seal of Yasda', even showing a young pharaoh holding an *ankh* and papyrus stem, with a baboon (Avigad 1978:67-69). These seals show how Egyptian symbolism spread to other areas and became a part of their own symbolism. This is especially true of the *ankh*.

5.3 THE SUN-DISK

The sun-disk is a pretty common symbol and occurs in many, if not all, cultures that have symbols. This is, of course, due to the omnipresent and universal nature of the sun itself. Every living thing on this planet is directly or indirectly touched by the sun. It gives energy to almost all forms of life (, and as such can easily be seen as the source of life itself.

This, of course, led to many solar deities and spirits developing all over the world. Relevant to our study is Ra/Re and Amon. Both of these gods are closely associated with the sun and the Sun-Disk, and are said to be the supreme gods in their respective Egyptian Theologies. Ra, Amon, Khepri and Horus were later amalgamated into on “mega” solar god that embodied all aspects of the sun.

5.3.1 Form

The sun-disk as symbol comes with many different “accessories”, but with a core symbol of a round circle. There were three typical and widely used sun-disk symbols in ancient Egypt. These will be looked at in the next section. In this study we are looking at the Sun-Disk as symbol and as abstract form. In other words, we will examine the Sun-Disk as representation of the sun, and also look at the sun itself as a “symbol”, especially in the open air temples and architecture of Heliopolis and Amarna.

5.3.2 Origins

The origins of the Sun-Disk as symbol is obvious to any human being that has ever seen or experienced the sun. The sun gives off rays of warmth, and these in turn “give life” to almost all visible life on earth. To cultures that are not scientifically advanced, the sun and weather elements, such as rain, are seen as supernatural forces. Usually, the sun and weather gods are at the head of the pantheon, or important figures in myths, because these two elements are of vital importance to agriculture. Shamash and Enlil in Mesopotamia (*Atrahasis* Myth), Teshub and Ishtanu/Eshtan in Anatolia (*Kumarbi* Cycle), Baal in Canaan (Baal Myths, and in the Bible) are all examples of these kinds of gods. In Egypt, however, fertility and “life” comes from the Nile, not

rain. This would mean that the ancient Egyptian saw how the sun (which directly causes seasons) made things grow together with the loamy earth and water from the Nile. The sun and earth deities are therefore superior in ancient Egypt, in the forms of Ra and Osiris. The logical next step is that the sun or sun-disk would be a central theme and symbol in ancient Egyptian Art, as it is.

An origin of the Winged disk is given in the story of "The Winged Sun-disk", where Horus Behedity is introduced as protector of the land and a sort of a divine warrior. He takes on the form of a sun-disk to smite and destroy the enemies of Ra, ironic in this case, since Ra is the sun god.

The wings the Sun-Disk has are variously identified as the wings of a scarab beetle, vulture or falcon. The vulture's wings make more sense in the winged sun-disk's role as protective symbol; the ancient Egyptians thought of the vulture as a protective creature, especially over its young. Anthes (1959) postulates that the ancient Egyptians viewed the sky as a vulture, and that the goddess Nut was portrayed as one (Anthes 1959:23), citing the many references to individuals being placed in Nut's "wings". I think that one could go further with this and postulate that the Winged Sun-disk was the personification of the sky (wings) that contain the Sun-Disk, and overarches the earth in a protective manner.

5.3.3 Meanings and Usage

There are three main forms of usage for the Sun-Disk symbol in ancient Egypt. The first is as a physical representation of the sun, raining blessings down on the king and other subjects. This form was most favoured by Akhenaten during the Amarna period. During the Amarna period, the Sun-Disk itself was represented purely and with no attachments to itself, with the exception of a few *ankh*s in some reliefs. Rays usually emanates from it. During other periods, especially from the Late Middle Kingdom, uraeus snakes accompany it, linking it solely to Ra.

Secondly it is portrayed as a headdress of a god or goddess, such as Ra, Hathor and Isis. It is usually in the form of a disk on the head or between horns on the head which associates or identifies the figure with Ra, identifying it as part of the divine pantheon-family of Helipolis.

The third is the Winged Sun-disk, or Behedeti. This form has Mesopotamian roots, and signifies protection and divine providence for the land or whatever scene or person is portrayed, and is also the most common form of the Sun-Disk in ancient Egypt. In the Late Period Tale/Legend of the Winged Sun-disk, Horus takes the form of the Winged Sun-disk to defeat evil and protect the

land (Pinch 2002:162). This winged sun-disk is reminiscent of the protective vulture goddess Nekhbet as it always seems to hover over important areas, such as gates, mummy coffin pectorals and where the king is (Wilson 2010:875). The Winged sun-disk, or sun-disk in general, is also associated, and commonly shown, with the *Wadjet Eye* and an uraeus, sometimes two, and Ra.

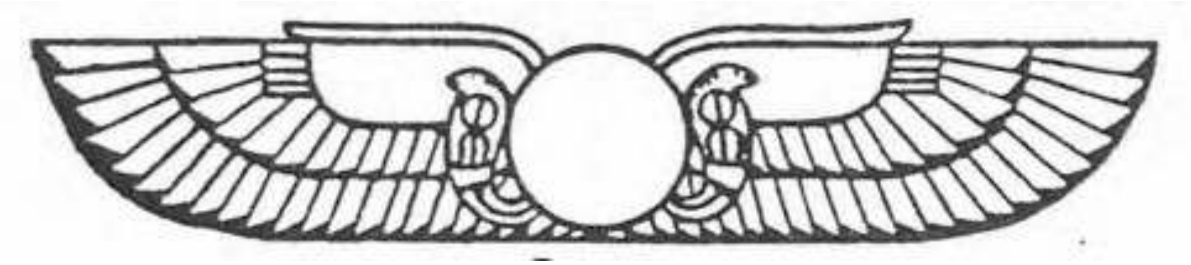


Figure 5.10: The Winged Sun-disk with double Uraei

Anthes (1959) follows a paper written by Gardiner, *Horus the Behdetite* (1944), where he argues that the winged Sun-disk may also refer to the living ruling King as "lord and protector of the two lands" (Anthes 1959:188). However, he goes on to differentiate between the iconography and symbolism of the "Hovering Horus" figure and the "Winged Sun-disk", saying that we do not know whether the winged sun-disk's wings are of the falcon or scarab beetle variety (Anthes 1959:189). With regards to this, the pectoral on the mummy case of Amen-Nestawy-Nakht, priest of Amun, as an example, is quite interesting. (Figure 5.11 below).

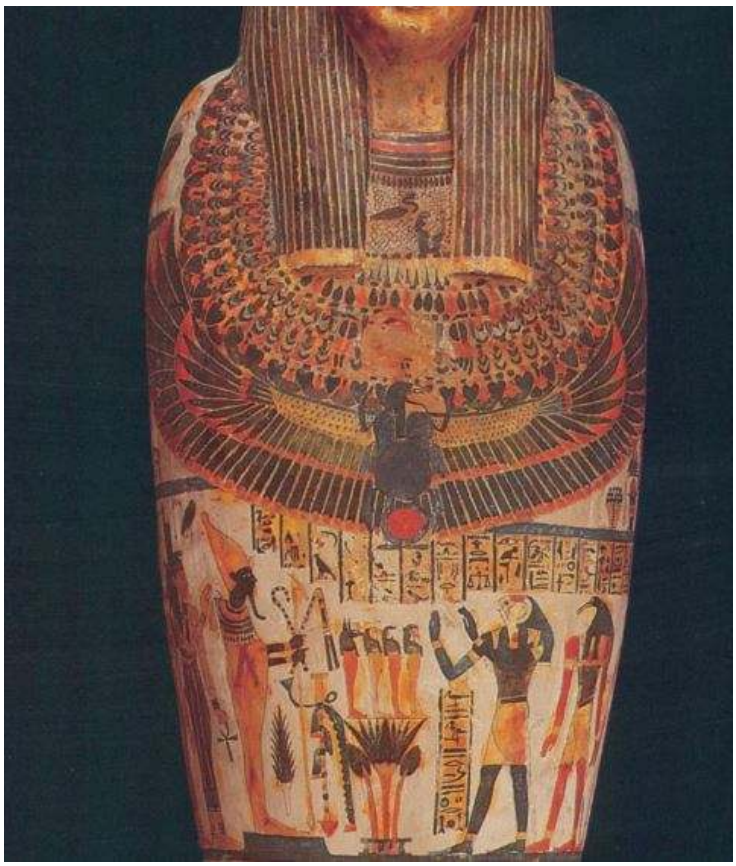


Figure 5.11: Detail of the chest part of the Coffin of Amen-Nestawy-Nakht, Museum of St. Louis (Goldstein 1990:16)

The mummy has a winged scarab over its pectoral, clasping a *shen* ring in its hind legs, with the outlines of a snake or some such figure emerging from its top, in place of a head. The associate director of the Museum calls this a "solar-winged, scarab beetle (sic)" (Goldstein 1990:16), and simply passes over it and on to the rich iconography of the lower registers. This is a very interesting, and possibly quite symbolic, image. Firstly, both the scarab and the Sun-Disk have "Winged" types. This could possibly be an amalgamated form of Ra as the morning sun, which is also associated with a scarab beetle, and Ra-Horakhty, which is associated with the winged sun-disk. Its placement over the heart is also symbolic, and outstretched wings give off the impression of a protective stance. Furthermore, the scarab beetle is also associated with the heart, and "perpetual renewal of life" (Pinch 2002:247). The *shen* ring, a symbol of eternity and "all-encompassingness", is often associated with or shown encompassing the Sun-Disk, as in this case (Freed 2010:911). Taken together, this image becomes quite powerful, as the "all-encompassing sun-disk Ra-Horakhty" stretching his wings of protection around the deceased in the coffin. The importance of the scarab will be discussed below.

This same usage can be seen on other coffins and reliefs, such as the symbolism-rich Mummy-Case and Board of Henettawy, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shown in Figure 5.12 below.

Figure 5.12: Coffin and Mummy Board of Henettawy, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/551108, accessed 12 June 2015)

In the above image, the two sets of scarabs holding the Sun-Disk is visible on the coffin lid and mummy board, and the position of the upper scarab is similar to that on the coffin of Amen-Nestawy-Nakht discussed above. Furthermore, Horus and Osiris pictured on the lower registers have sun-disks on their heads, possibly as a portrayal of divinity (discussed in more detail below) Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14 below are close ups of the above image.

Figure 5.13: Detail of Henettawy's coffin lid

The scarabs on Henettawy's coffin are more scarab-like in appearance than the one on Amen-Nestawy-Nakht's coffin. The head is that of the insect, and not a snake-like figure. The wings on the upper scarab are also more insect like, and creates the illusion of beating wings. The lower scarab is seen within some structure, flanked by Osiris figures on both sides, without wings, but in the same "pushing the Sun-disk" pose as the upper one, with a *shen* ring under it. The Sun-disks also have two cobras hanging from it, with the striped band around the disk presumably being their bodies, entwined around the disk.

In addition to the scarabs and their sun-disks, there are also winged snakes on the left arm (the figure's right arm), with sun-disks on their heads. These snakes also seem to grasp *was* sceptres and are blessing the Horus falcon with *shen* rings, possibly spelling out "eternal rulership to Horus", if one takes the symbolism of the *was* and *shen* together. Figure 5.14 below shows the scarabs and sun-disks on the mummy board in detail.

Figure 5.14: Detail of Henettawy's mummy board.

On the mummy Board, we get two scarab beetles on the chest once more, with one on each arm, and flanked by winged *Wadjet Eye*s in all four cases. The *Wadjet Eye* will be discussed in its own section later. In this case the scarabs are winged with bird like wings.

The importance of the scarab to the Sun-Disk is inherent in the one story-cycle about the sun's travels. Since at least the Old Kingdom Period, it was believed that the Sacred scarab Beetle, Khepri (also spelled as Kheprer), rolled the ball of the sun and other celestial bodies across the sky. This was based on the observation of real dung beetles rolling balls of dung to their nests,

out of which hatched other dung beetles, making the dung beetle a symbol of regeneration and rebirth. As such, Khepri was associated with the re-born sun at dawn. In the funerary context, this sun-disk and beetle combination invokes rebirth, as the sun is "reborn" every morning, so the deceased is reborn in the kingdom of Osiris. Because of this, the scarab became one of the symbols of the sun.

The symbolism of the pure winged sun-disk always seems to be that of protection, overarching whichever scene is below. This is captured in the words of the *Legend of the Winged Sun-disk*, the first chapter of the Myth of Horus at Edfu:

"*Horus of Behdet flew up ('pi) to heaven as the Great Winged Disk ('pl wr), and therefore he is called "great god, lord of heaven" to this day. …. The god of Behdet is come as snbti, the great Winged Disk, who destroys (?) the rebels and foes [of Ra*]" (translation from H.W. Fairman in his discussion of the Myth of Horus at Edfu, 1935, page 28).

From the above quote, it is clear that the Winged sun-disk is Horus as protector of Ra, and the one who smites Ra's enemies. This does have quite interesting connotations to the living Egyptian King, who is seen as Horus, and who smites the enemies of Ra. The king is also said to fly up to the sky in the shape of a falcon when he died. (Hornung 1995:1721, 1727) Ramses even went so far as to appear as the sun god himself, and was called "Sun of Egypt" (Hornung 1995:1727). The winged sun-disk may therefore be viewed as an overarching symbol of protection and per extension in some cases the protective capacity of the King of Egypt or Horus over the land.

Another royal connection that the Winged Sun-disk may have is pointed out by Rudolf Anthes, supported by Gardiner, in that the Winged sun is an actual representation of the king of Egypt (Anthes 1959:188). They both base this theory on an inscription from Sinai, by Niuser-Ra. Furthermore, they equate the Hovering Falcon with the Sun-disk, though only nominally, warning that too little is known of the kind of wings (see Origin above).

The following image shows an example of the Winged Sun-disk in its protective symbolic stance over the king.

Figure 5.15: Detail of Vienna Inventory No. 89, a mortuary stelae of Meryptah (Schulman 1963)

The "window of appearances" in the Medinet Habu temple has Nekhbet in this role of protection, which may be linked with the iconography of the winged sun-disk.

Figure 5.16: Nekhbet in a protective stance on the ceiling of the Window of Appearances in the Medinet Habu temple.

The “unwinged” Sun-disk is primarily associated with the gods; Hathor is represented as a cow with a sun-disk and uraeus between her horns and Horus as a falcon with a sun-disk on his head (Holland 2009:20). This can be seen in Figure 5.17 below, where Hathor is shown with her consort, Horus, and their son. Notice here that only Hathor has her sun-disk between her horns. Horus is portrayed as the king of Egypt, the one who united the two lands, identified by his double crown (web0.memphis.edu/egypt/dendara04.php). The sun-disk that Hathor wears identifies her as part of the sun, a reference to the myth about Ra sending Hathor in the form of a raging lioness to earth as punishment for a rebellion against him.

Figure 5.17: The Divine Triad of Dendara (web0.memphis.edu/egypt/dendara.php)

Ra is associated with various gods during his “life” in a day, identified with a sun-disk. In the morning the “young sun” and “conqueror” is seen as *Ra-Herakhty* (see Figure 5.18 and Figure 5.19 below), the conglomeration of Horus and Ra (Pinch 2002:200). During the day he can take many forms, usually a winged or unwinged sun-disk with an uraeus or two attached. At night he is joined with a ram-headed Osiris or Sokaris, always with the Sun-Disk on the head. As Amun-

Ra, he could take any of these forms, as Egyptian theologies overlapped and compounded throughout the years (Hornung 1995:1719, Te Velde & Van Dijk 1995:1739).

Figure 5.18: Stela from the Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, showing Ra-Herakhty and other gods (web0.memphis.edu/egypt/dendara.php).

Figure 5.19: Painted panel of Tatiaset, showing a late rendering of Ra-Herakhty (www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/550807)

The Sun-disk can therefore be seen to be an integral part of the iconography of Ra. However, it is not solely linked to him at all times during Egypt's long history. Akhenaten's Aten was the sole, pure sun-disk in its purest form, but very far removed from Ra or any other Egyptian god, even though the uraeus that is traditionally associated with Ra appears in Amarna Iconography, as shown in Figure 5.20 below.

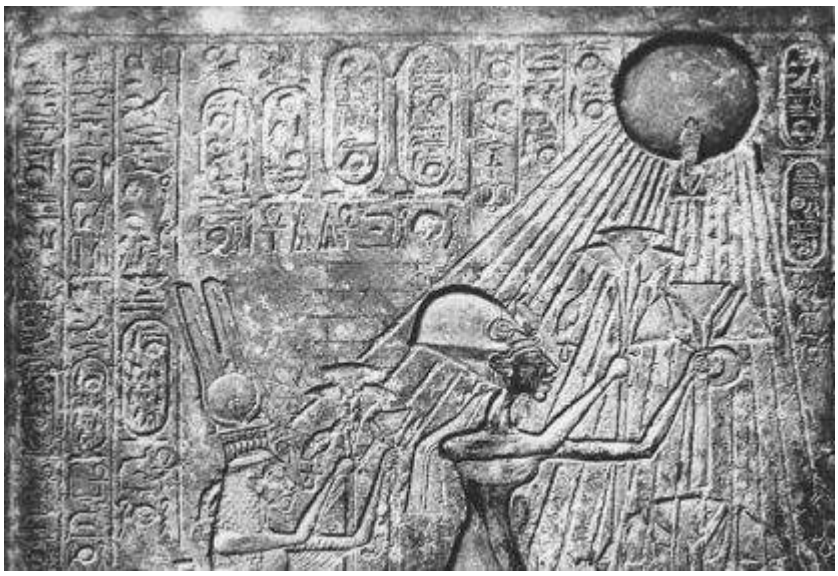


Figure 5.20: Part of an engraving from Amarna (Holland 2009:60, cropped from original for detail)

5.4 THE WADJET EYE

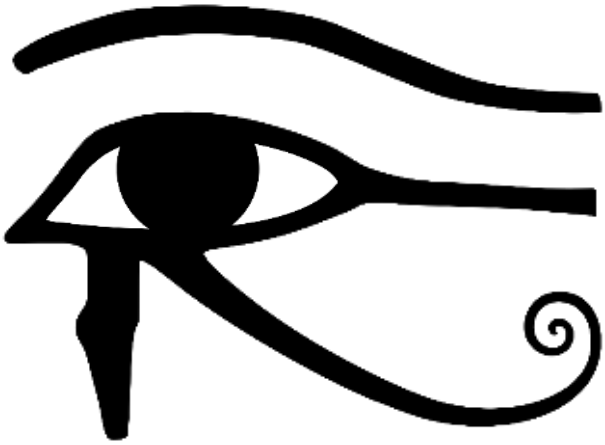


Figure 5.21: The Wadjet Eye (Encarta Encyclopaedia 2004 Software Edition)

The *Wadjet Eye*, also known as the Eye of Horus, *Wedjat* or *Udjat Eye*, is one of the most easily recognised of ancient Egyptian Symbols, largely due to its particular shape, and association with the arcane and occult. Its ancient meaning may, however, be much more complicated than the *ankh*'s.

In this study we will refer to this symbol as the "*Wadjet Eye*", although it is used and known under several different names. Some lay-people refer to this eye symbol as the All Seeing Eye, thinking it to be the root of the Masonic symbol of the same name[12] (more on this in Chapter 6).

[12] This information comes from personal conversations, reading art forums and some conspiracy theorist/Christian-based teachings, such as "*Mythology and the Coming Deception*" by Rob Skiba, a lay-conspiracy theorist. None of these people used real Ancient Near Eastern sources, but rather hearsay.

5.4.1 Form

Stylistically, the *Wadjet Eye* looks like any "Egyptian" Eye, as seen on any mural where an Egyptian person is shown with eyes. This is because it was drawn along the same lines as a normal eye. The only differences between the two lies in the long "down sweep" in the *Wadjet Eye* and the vertical "tear line", seen as typical markings for Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*), the animal that Horus represents (Pinch 147:2002).

Figure 5.22: An example of a Peregrine Falcon. Note the black markings around the eye, similar to the "sweeps" of the Wadjet Eye (WikiMedia).

5.4.2 Origins

The mythological origins of the *Wadjet Eye* as "eye" may be found in the Horus Myth Cycle *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* and in the myths surrounding Ra and his eye, as well as the etymology of the word Wadjet itself.

The phrase/name "*Wadjet Eye*" shows the link between the eye symbol and the snake goddess Wadjet. She is a very ancient pre-dynastic goddess of the delta region and the eye symbol was seen as one of her personifications. The origins of the symbolism of the *Wadjet Eye* would, I believe, be made clearer when looking at her attributes and power.

Wadjet is also known as an "uraeus", or the Eye of Ra and one of the "Two Ladies" of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nekhbet and Wadjet, respectively. "Wadjet" means "the green [powerful] one" (a reference to health) or "she of the papyrus", a reference to the healing power of the papyrus plant (Pinch 2002:212). As "Eye of Ra" she is associated with Sekhmet, a lion headed goddess of great power and terror. In later years, specifically the very late "Late Period" (from 700 BC onwards), Wadjet came to be seen as synonymous with Sekhmet due to this connection. A

common spell in the Hellenistic Era invokes "*Sekhmet of yesterday, Wadjet of today…. Protect the King*..." (Quoted from James 1982:159-160).

The jump from "cobra" to "Eye", though quite a leap for a modern person, seemed natural to the ancient Egyptians. In the Egyptian Heliopolitan Creation myth, Atum creates Shu (air) and Tefnut (land) but loses them in the "darkness of the primeval waters". He sends his only Eye (a female goddess with the name of "Eye") to look for them, and this eye appears as the "Eye of Ra", or the first sunrise, over Shu and Tefnut. Upon returning, the Eye is angry because she has been replaced as Atum grew a new one. To appease her, he makes her the first cobra and sets her on his head as an uraeus (Pinch 2002:64). This seems to satisfy the snake-goddess connotation and shows a clear correlation between an eye and a cobra. Furthermore, "Wadjet" also means "she of the papyrus" which is a clear reference to something living in papyrus stalks - the natural habitat of an Egyptian Cobra. Buto, or "Per-Wadjet" ("House of Wadjet"), was in the Nile delta region, and had plenty of Papyrus and cobras. Buto was, as the Egyptian name shows, the city of the goddess Wadjet, where the cobra was venerated (Budge 1904:94). In the later *Destruction of Mankind* myth the "Eye" is once again sent out to destroy the blaspheming humans, in the form of Hathor, connecting these two goddesses as well (Budge 1904:393).

The link to Horus comes with the oft quoted Contendings, where Horus loses one or two eyes (depending on theology) and the eye(s) is/are restored by Isis, Ra or Thoth, once again depending on which theology/version you read. Though the actors are different, the concepts are, however, the same as when Ra loses an eye. The Wadjet symbol, used for the restored eye, as a common theme in the New Kingdom specifically where Horus is merged with Ra as *Ra-Herakhty* in some contexts, which could lead to the argument that Horus' eye was the goddess.

Furthermore, the *Wadjet Eye* itself has been noted as having hawk-like properties, even though its name and cultic associations are with female goddesses such as Wadjet herself and Hathor in the form of the Meh-urit cow and other forms. This falcon connection can be seen in the amulets depicted above as well, where the *Wadjet Eye* is detailed with feathered wings.

The *Wadjet Eye* is therefore quite an intricate symbol that is linked to various aspects and deities of mythology. Its main function seems to have been as a symbol for regenerative power and magic, as seen by its origins as healed eye and cobra papyrus goddess.

5.4.3 Meanings and Usage

The *Wadjet Eye* is, in fact, many eyes and can refer to the Eye of Ra or/and the Eye[s] of Horus. These elements refer to different myths and myth cycles, with the Eye of Ra connotation referring first to Wadjet as uraeus that caused the first sunrise and then to Hathor as Sekhmet taking out vengeance on the earth. When this Eye symbol refers to Horus, it can refer either to his Solar and Lunar Eyes (i.e. the Sun and Moon if he is seen as a celestial falcon), his damaged/stolen eye(s), as seen in the Contendings of Horus and Seth myth cycles, and it may also be a symbol of Horus the Falcon (Pinch 2002:131-133, el-Saady 1994; Bianchi 1985).

This plurality of meanings creates a very ambiguous situation where, since Horus is seen as an all-encompassing celestial falcon, his eyes can become the sun and moon. Granted this, it follows logically that his Sun Eye must have a connotation to Ra and his Moon Eye a connotation to Thoth. Because of this, the Eye is also seen as a symbol of the wisdom of Thoth. The *Wadjet Eye* is also used as an abstract idea in most ancient Egyptian murals and images. In fact, as Geraldine Pinch points out in her book, Handbook of Egyptian Mythology, the *Wadjet Eye* is used as a symbol for almost all levels of the divine, representing various goddesses, such as Wadjet and Tayet, and their ideologies (el-Saady 1994 & Pinch 2002:131). This seemingly confusing situation illustrates the complexity of the *Wadjet Eye* as symbol.

To further illustrate the complexity of ancient Egyptian symbolism, we look at An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary, by E.A. Wallis Budge. According to the entries, a name for the "Eye of Horus", as he calls it, was *ankh*¬-t, which means "the living one" (Budge 1920:125). Other names listed by Budge in his dictionary are *Urit* (moon eye only), *Utchait* (moon eye only), *Merit* (part of the magical boat of Ra), *Netrit* (both eyes), *khakerit* (ornament or neck collar), *Ami* (a fire god, possibly a precursor local sun-god), *År-t-åabt* (the moon), *År-t-Heru* (referring to the sun, various Eyes of Horus) and so on. From this list one can easily see that the *Wadjet Eye*/Eye of Horus as concept was much, much more than a simple amulet or representation of any one thing. It is a celestial sign, as can be inferred from it referring to the sun, moon, sky and fire elements, gods (Ra and Horus) and goddesses (Wadjet, Tefnut, and a moon goddess known only by the association) (Budge 1920).

Figure 5.23 below shows how the *Wadjet Eye* is used by Hathor as a normal eye, associating the Eye with her benevolent form. This goes to show the multifacetedness of the symbol, as it seems

to be able to be used for any god or goddess related to the qualities of health, regeneration and power.

Figure 5.23: Detail from Plate 18 from Budge 1904, volume II, showing Hathor with a Wadjet Eye.

In the Papyrus of Ani the *Wadjet Eye* is used in a variety of interesting ways. In Plate 8, the *Wadjet Eye* is seen standing on top of a tomb. This is described as a commemoration of "the day Horus fought Seth". (Budge 1904, plate 8) Directly following this is Meh-urit, a cow, also known as "the Eye of Ra", another form of Hathor and the *Wadjet Eye*'s one personification. Throughout the papyrus, boats are seen with *Wadjet Eye*s on their prows and various other forms of the Eye. In a section known as the "Eighth Pylon" a hawk is guarding the pylon with a Wadjet above him. In the "hall of Double Right and Truth" Ani is addressing various gods and goddesses and interestingly enough, his buttocks are described as the "Buttocks of the Eye of Horus". (Budge, Baldock ed, 2011) This is also attested to in the Papyrus of Nu, which Wallis Budge originally translated.

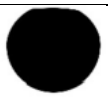
In addition to its religious and deity-based symbolism, the *Wadjet Eye* was also used as an amulet (due to its healing properties) and an illustration of fractions of a *hekat*, the main measure of offered grain in ancient Egypt (Cox 2007:234-235).

The *Wadjet Eye*/Eye of Horus was seen as symbol of a sacrifice, as the Eye given up in the fight against evil, and also possibly because of the *hekat* measurements used to measure out quantities for offerings. The sacrificial symbolism of the *Wadjet Eye* also ties in with the healing aspect where Isis/Thoth heals the damaged/missing eye that Horus "Sacrificed" in his fight with

Seth (Pinch 2002:134). Interestingly enough, these fractions only add up to "63" /"64"[13] , with a perfect “whole” achieved by adding the pieces together, forming the symbol for restoration and “wholeness” (Pinch 2002:148).

Table 1 below shows the fraction-symbols that make up the *Wadjet Eye*. These symbols were used in Egyptian mathematics Papyri to denote certain fractions (Robin 1995:1801). The images used are rough cuts of Figure 5.21.

Table 1: Illustration of the Wadjet Eye’s Hekat fractions (adapted from Kavett & Kavett 1975:394 and Figure 5.21)

Left Part of the Eye		$\frac{1}{2}$
Centre (Pupil)		$\frac{1}{4}$
Eyebrow		$\frac{1}{8}$
Right Part of the Eye		$\frac{1}{16}$
Down sweep		$\frac{1}{32}$
Vertical Line		$\frac{1}{64}$

[13] This concept of the 64 parts of “wholeness” can be traced to Chinese philosophy as well, though I doubt these are related in more than the base mathematics.

The *Wadjet Eye* may have been a particular religious symbol in pre-dynastic times, as evidenced by the association of the goddess Wadjet with Pe and Dep, ancient delta towns. Here she was known as "she of the papyrus [reeds]", a reference to the natural habitat of the cobra, but also to the healing powers of the papyrus itself (Pinch 2002:212, Watterson 1999:129 in Golding 2013[14]). However, as the theologies and the myths kept growing and compounding each other, the lines between symbol and abstract idea became blurred. This seems to have cumulated in various texts from the New Kingdom where a deity, usually a goddess, identifies with the mythos or ideology of the symbol. In the Coffin Texts Spell 331 Hathor declares: "*I have become the Eye of Horus, and vice versa*" (quoted in Darnell 1997), and throughout the collection known as the *Book of the Dead* the *Wadjet Eye* is shown to represent more than simply a symbol. It seems to portray a whole system of enigmatic expressions and symbolisms, varying from being regarded as the Moon and Sun "Eyes" of Ra to healing and restoration magic and finally to being a "humble" simple symbol for the unit in which offerings were measured, much like we use "kg" or £.

Because of this varied range of meaning, the *Wadjet Eye* became one of the most famous symbols for Amulets and for protective use on coffins and ships. This stems from the "Eye of Horus" part of the symbol's iconography, where Horus' eye was healed after Seth gouged it out during one of their fights. The word "Wedjat" itself means "the sound one" and refers to this story in the *Contendings* myth cycle, where Horus' Eye is made whole again after Seth destroys it. It refers specifically to the more powerful green eye of Horus, as opposed to his "weaker" white eye (Pinch 2002:147-148). Its use as protective symbol and amulet would then be to cause "wholeness" for the vessel or person to which it was fixed, an idea that spread throughout the Mediterranean with Eyes affixed to the prows of many ancient ships.

The section on the *ankh* earlier in this chapter has examples where the eye is used on coffins together with the *ankh*. Their use here would suggest that they ensure that the body stays whole as well as regenerates in the afterlife. To this end a *Wadjet Eye* amulet was often placed over the wounds inflicted on the body of a person during the mummification process (Pinch 2002:148).

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[14] Dissertation titled "Perceptions of the serpent in the ancient near east: Its Bronze Age role in Apotropaic magic, healing and Protection" by Wendy Golding, November 2013.

The figures below show some Wadjet amulets from exhibitions in the British Museum.

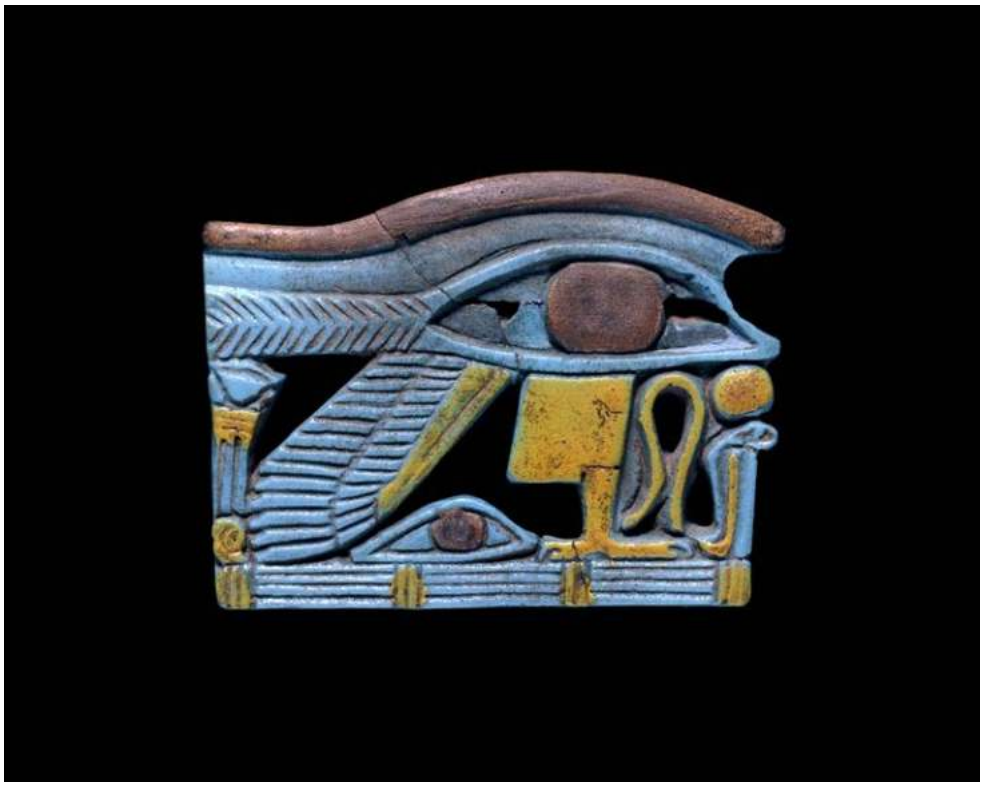

Figure 5.24: Piece EA29222 in the British museum shows a wonderfully detailed Wadjet Eye Amulet with wings

Figure 5.25: Exhibit EA8082 in the British museum shows the different kinds and quality amulets that had the Wadjet as theme.

Figure 5.26: A collection of amulets form the British Museum, and from different Eras in Egypt's history.

These figures further illustrate the many different forms and styles that the *Wadjet Eye* was depicted with.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we looked at the physical form, origins, meanings and original usage of the *ankh*, sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*.

The *ankh* was seen as the embodiment of life itself. Used as a noun or verb, superior beings could apply "*ankh*" to a person/thing, or it could be used to refer to life or life-force itself. After surveying all the theories on the origin of the *ankh*, the theory that has the most merit is the one

by Gordon and Schwabe (2004) that the *ankh*'s form and iconography was derived from the thoracic vertebrae of a bull. This would have been familiar to the priests in ancient Egypt, as they sacrificed the forequarter of a bull as part of sacrificial ritual.

The sun-disk symbol may be observed in most cultures where the sun played a part in the religion. This shows a naturalistic origin, where the natural sun was embodied in a symbol. The meaning and usage of this disk is almost always in a protective position above important figures in the form of the Winged Sun-disk. As simple disk it was worshipped as the *Aten* by Akhenaten and also denoted any figure associated with divinity and Ra specifically.

The *Wadjet Eye* is by far the most abstract and "magical" of the symbols studied. Of humble origins in the swamps of Buto where the cobra was worshipped, it came to stand for a vast array of abstract symbolism. From being the Eye of Ra, the Eye of Horus and denoting association with the "active" aspects of Ra (Hathor, the goddess Wadjet and others) to being a protective healing symbol (supported by myths) and a symbol of the Egyptian Pantheon in general, this symbol is one of the most powerful symbols found in ancient Egypt.

In looking at the form, origins, meanings and usage of the ancient Egyptian symbols, we now have something to compare their modern usage to. In the next chapter, we will look at the way in which modern society interprets this usage into modern culture.

CHAPTER 6: THE MODERN CONTEXT

Abstract

Ancient Egyptian symbols are found in all parts of modern culture, especially jewellery, art (performing and classical) and religion. These symbols are, for the most part, not used as their Ancient counterparts were originally, but rather form part of an "Egyptomanic" phenomenon where ancient symbols are used to create a mystical atmosphere or look. Some uses in art, especially by European-based bands (performing art) and the works of Fabrizio Clerici show the other side - where the symbols are used within their original iconographic contexts or meanings. The general consensus, however, is that the use of ancient Egyptian symbols in modern culture can be linked to the romanticising and "re-enchanting" of modern "disenchanted" society.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will look at the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* and how they are used in their pure or derived forms in our modern western culture. We will look at their popular use and usage in the Arts and Religion of our modern western culture. Each of our three symbols will not be represented in all of these categories, due to their varying popularity. By far the most popular Egyptian symbol is the *ankh*. People from all walks of life and levels of education in Ancient Near Eastern culture wear it[15]. In the arts, the Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* are more popular, due to their artistic form. In Religious systems, most specifically Christianity and its flavours, the *ankh* is once again the most popular of the three symbols, most probably due to its meanings of life and resurrection. These will all be studied in detail in the following sections.

In studying the usage of the symbols in modern culture, we will try to draw parallels between the ancient Egyptian usage and our modern usages. However, we will not delve into abstract speculations and seek connections where there are no obvious ones. This is an introductionary study of the symbolism of the ancient Egyptian symbols in our modern culture, not an exhaustive nor interpretive one. The link between ancient Egypt and our modern culture has already been

[15] My own observations based on real life situations, conversations and a general look at any Google search involving the *Ankh* and popular culture.

established in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, and we will compare our findings in this chapter with the ancient ones in Chapter 5.

6.2 GENERAL USE

A culture is gauged by its people and their customs. In fact, “culture” is made up of customs that people follow and set forth in their lives.

Since we live in a world where almost everything happens online, Google Search and popular websites will come in handy in this area; since ours has become a digital culture. In Chapter 3 we already established that ancient Egypt is well represented online through both scholarly institutions and popular arts. These will be discussed later. In this section we are concerned mainly with how people use the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* in their everyday lives, such as jewellery, accessories and as personal items or symbols.

6.2.1 Jewellery

Many people of an “alternative” persuasion, such as Free Spiriters and students, use “mystical” or “alternative” symbols to set themselves apart from society. The wearing of the *ankh* is usually part of this “rebellion”. I have talked to some people that come across my path and wear the *ankh* as a necklace or charm. Some have preferred to remain anonymous, but for the most part they were eager to share, and agreed to be quoted, though not everyone agreed to be photographed (due to either time constraints or setting):

Stephanie Harris, student of Ancient Near Eastern Culture and Grants Coordinator at the NRF wears a small gold *ankh* as necklace to identify with her research area, and because she likes the symbolism the *ankh* carries and wears it to promote that symbolism, as a conversation piece. She also likes to wear it to raise awareness of other cultures in a s*taun*ch traditionalist setting, such as the NG Church (details from a conversation at a meeting of the ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern Society, information used with permission).

Lionel van Tonder, a student of Psychology, lay-history student and co-worker wears a metal *ankh* as a “man neck charm (sic)” because he also likes the symbolism. He wears it interchangeably with a cross “for no particular reason other than” he likes it. (Details from a lunchtime conversation, information used with permission.)

The two people mentioned above both did research into the original usage and symbolism of the *ankh* and are well read on the subject and its uses.

While buying groceries at a popular supermarket, I ran across two guys of the “alternative” persuasion, each wearing huge (about 10cm long and wide) wooden *ankh*s, reminiscent of how a Roman Catholic priest would wear his large wooden cross. I asked them about it, but was at first received with cold hostility (no doubt they thought I was some “churchly do-gooder” about to tell them about the “satanic” symbol they wear). After explaining why I am interested, they opened up more and explained that they were “free spiriters” that assimilate different parts of religious systems and culture as it suits them. The *ankh* is a sign of freedom, life and “the life force” to them, and they wear it with pride and to “stick it” to society. They requested that I not publish their names, just that they are students at the University of Pretoria.

This brings us to another point on ancient Egyptian symbols. Due to the fact that these were used in an ancient religion seen as “pagan“ by the church, many people raised in the traditional churches or culture see these symbols as occultic or “satanic”. Anyone who wears such symbols are therefore also tagged with these tags. This is very clear in the reactions of people who wear these symbols when asked about them.

All three these people are from Pretoria in South Africa. Though not a representative sample at all, one does see many students who wear the *ankh* as charm or necklace. Most of them know what its connection to “life” and Egypt is, due to the vast amount of information available online and in the media, although few people know what the word “*ankh*” means or refers to if they are asked.

The figures below show some ancient Egyptian symbols in modern jewellery. Usage by artists in pop culture will be under the art section explored later in this chapter. For jewellery influenced by the Egyptian Revival, see Section 6.3.1.3.2 below.

Figure 6.1: An Ankh pendant on sale from www.hieroglyphicjewelry.com

The website www.hieroglyphicjewelry.com (Last Accessed 26/07/2015) offers a wide variety of ancient Egyptian symbols as or in jewellery. The existence of websites like these and others (see below) is testament to the fact that jewellery with an ancient Egyptian motif or symbol is popular in modern culture. However, whether these are used in the original ancient Egyptian context or not is dependent on the person who buys it. The fact that ancient Egyptian jewellery is so common online (as a simple google search will show, and the sites listed below) shows that people seem to think it worthy of their money to wear a more "alternative" piece of jewellery as well as more traditional motifs.

Figure 6.2: An "Eye of Horus & Egyptian Drawing ankh Pendant Set with Box Chain Necklaces in Gold-Tone" from www.amazon.com, marketed by NYfashion 101, a "hipster" fashion retail website.

Note the figure of Akhenaten and the Aten on the stem of the *ankh* in the picture above, showing how modern artists mix up different motifs and symbols from different areas of ancient Egyptian culture. Akhenaten is also viewed as an extraordinary individual and is well known in modern society as a culture changer and individual in history. On this site the *Wadjet Eye* is called the Eye of Horus.

Figure 6.3: An advertisement by GoJane, another modern fashion site and supplier.

The advertisement in the figure above, posted on GoJane's blogging site, blog.gojane.com, is a part of their June 2013 Egyptian Lover Theme micro trend fashion series, the tagline reads:

"Why we're such hard-core Egyptian lovers: crazy thick black eyeliner, all gold errrrthang (sic), and super yoked-up shirtless dudes in skirts! GoJane is so diggin' on this ode to ancient Egypt thing, and we think it's a fresh little trend you should try on this season. Take a look at some of our fave (sic) GoJane picks." (Malinn Loci on blog.gojane.com/2013/06/04/microtrend-egyptian-lover/, accessed on 27/07/2015) Note the colloquial slang used to make it appealing to the youth. The Wadjet Eye and ankh, as the two most easily recognised symbols of ancient Egypt, are heavily focussed on. On this site, the Wadjet Eye is referred to as the Eye of Ra.

Figure 6.4: Isis ankh Pendant (sic) from www.abaxion.com

The figure above comes from www.abaxion.com, a new-age themed site where one can find all manner of mystic symbols from pentagrams to eastern symbols of the Om and Yin Yang, with the tagline "*Your one stop world-wide supplier on the net for occult & new age merchandise*". This pendant is rather interesting in its symbolism. It is in the overall form of an *ankh*, with Isis's wings forming the crossbars. However, Isis is depicted in a crucifix form on the stem, with the *Wadjet Eye* in the loop, making it quite a powerful symbol of ancient Egyptian symbolism in action, and it seems quite at home on this website, considering the tagline. The site's description for the pendant reads: "*The ankh is the Egyptian symbol of life. The tau or looped cross means both life and hand mirror. It is a symbol of regeneration, an amulet against bad luck and a talisman for good fortune. It also represents the union of the male principle (the staff) and the female principle (the closed loop).*" (www.abaxion.com/ut877.htm accessed on 26/07/2015). In the light of this, it is safe to say that this is one pendant that certainly will be used as the ancient Egyptians would have used it. Their reference to the *tau* cross from the Greek alphabet will be explored later in this chapter.

Figure 6.5: A "Cult of Isis Goddess ancient Egyptian Sun-disk Horns Headdress Hathor Necklace" for sale on E-Bay (www.ebay.com/itm/Cult-of-Isis-Goddess-Ancient-Egyptian-Sun-Disk-Horns-Headdress-Hathor-Necklace-/181768452574).

The pendant available on E-bay above is another example of how people "popularize" ancient Egyptian symbols. It is interesting to note that it is called a "Cult of Isis" amulet, associating it with the "Fellowship of Isis", discussed later in this chapter. Many regular jewellery shops in South Africa stock jewellery with *Ankh*s and other ancient Egyptian motifs, though these vary by season and demand.

6.2.2 As secular symbol

Ancient Egyptian symbols have also found their way into the secular and corporate world, where they are used as signs and logos.

6.2.2.1 Medicine and science

Here the *Wadjet Eye* is of particular importance and how it and the ℞ symbol in pharmaceutical sciences is related. Pharmacists have long used the symbol ℞ as an abbreviation for the Latin word for "recipe". However, this symbol has clear roots in ancient Egypt, as discovered by Michael Koenig, a medical doctor who wrote a short piece on it in 1939 for the American Journal of Nursing (Koenig 1939:353-354). 60 years later, a British pharmacologist re-examined this, drawing a line through from the ancient Egyptian Eye of Horus/*Wadjet Eye*. (Aronson 1999:1543)

Both scholars contend that the ℞ and *Wadjet Eye* as medical symbol come from the Myth of Horus and Set, where Set damages Horus's eye (either the real eye or the Moon, depending on the myth), and it is restored by Thoth. The eye then came to stand for healing and apothecarial arts. Horus also has four sons, each a guardian of the internal organs of the mummified dead, further strengthening his connection to healing and medical sciences. The eye of Horus ties in with an article by Paul Ernest in the Mathematics at School Journal where he examines the ancient Egyptian method of calculating and representing fractions, using the *Wadjet Eye* (Ernest 1998:27). The Greeks and Romans loved and adored Egyptian mystic culture (as discussed in Chapter 3, especially their arcane and apothecarial arts, and made the *Wadjet Eye* the symbol of Jupiter, a "lucky" god who would bless the recipe if his symbol was attached to it (Koenig 1939:353). The practice of appending a pharmacist's prescription with the ℞ continues down to this day, though many believe it is an abbreviation of the Latin word recipe, and have even invented new "x" symbols to denote medicinal practices, such as I_x for "Investigations", S_x for "Symptoms" and D_x for "Diagnosis" (Aronson 1999:1543).

6.2.2.2 Organizations and Websites

While the *Wadjet Eye* is a popular and general symbol for Egypt and the mystical/occult; it is also the main logo of some organizations. The extent of the wide scope of the popularity of this symbol is shown in our examples:

Figure 6.6: The logo of a tour agency, Tour Egypt (www.touregypt.net, accessed 6 Nov 2015)

Figure 6.7: The logo of software company WadjetEye Games (http://www.wadjeteyegames.com/, accessed 6 Nov 2015)

What is interesting is that "*Wadjet Eye* Games" have no games set in Egypt. The name comes from Dave Gilbert, the CCO's, love of Egyptology, especially the Horus myths. Because of this love, he decided that the *Wadjet Eye* would be a good symbol to use as a logo for his company (www.wadjeteyegames.com/faqs/, accessed 6 Nov 2015). The logo is a modern stylized version of the *Wadjet Eye*, with all the main features. The other organization, Tour Egypt, is an Egyptian travel agency. Their use of the *Wadjet Eye* is meant to evoke the romantic image of ancient Egypt that has helped to keep its tourist industry so alive and people admiring the ancient Egyptian culture.

These two logos shows the context in which the *Wadjet Eye*, and ancient Egyptian Symbols as a whole, are seen in modern culture. Some people like the romantic ancient images that these symbols evoke. Of exotic tours in a faraway and mystical land. Others simply use and like them for their aesthetic nature, whilst others see them as signs of the original occult (see the rest of this chapter, especially the previous section).

6.3 THE ARTS

In this section, the arts in general will be examined for ancient Egyptian symbols and symbolisms. We will look at western art, specifically its origins in the Renaissance and the influences of Egyptian symbolism there on paintings and architecture of more modern times. Of note here is

Leon Battista Alberti, one of the earliest European artists to incorporate ancient Egyptian symbolism in his work, and in his case, his life. (Schneider 1990)

The musical arts that we will be looking at will consist of modern day celebrities and their performances and music videos. The linguistic symbolisms of their songs will not be discussed, as this would fall out of the field of a symbolic-iconographic study and lean towards a literary study, something for which there are ample sources for a later study. With regards to such a study, it is interesting to note that many modern songs refer to ancient Egypt and/or have ancient Egyptian symbolism inherent to the lyrics.

6.3.1 Paintings, Sculptures and Architecture

In this section the use of ancient Egyptian symbols in modern/western paintings, sculptures and architecture will be discussed.

6.3.1.1 Nimbus/Sun-disk in paintings

In a study such as this one, one is very much tempted to compare types as a matter of course. For instance, since the Nimbus/Halo is, in effect, a sun-disk in form, one would therefore expect that the ancient Egyptian sun-disk was the precursor for the Christian Halo/Nimbus. However, a close examination of the history of the nimbus shows otherwise. This research is included to make the whole a complete study, as this was one of the areas that I targeted.

The nimbus, or halo, is one of the most common motifs in Christian iconic art. In art and religious studies it may also be known as an aureole or “Glory” (www.newadvent.org). Seen only after the 5th century AD in a Christeo-religious setting, it was previously used to show the “dignitas” and majesty of important people in secular Christian life, such as kings and emperors. (Tavenor-Perry 1907:21 & Ramsden 1941:127) At this time saints and other religious-based figures were shown normally, as human figures with no extras.

There was much discussion about the origin of religious motifs and symbols used in the European Catholic Church at the turn of the 19th century. Usually at the centre of these debates is the nimbus and its association with the sun. In 1907 J Tavenor-Perry brought all of these arguments together in a short two part article titled “The Nimbus in Eastern Art”, published in Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs, Vol. 12, Nos. 55 & 56. His conclusion of the matter is that although the Nimbus/Halo comes from the Ancient Near East; it is a Mesopotamian and Persian form,

which was taken West by the Greeks and later Byzantines. This opinion was printed as early as 1880 in an article in The Art Amateur, titled only "Religious Symbolism in Art"[16], with no author listed. This would therefore reflect the general sentiment of the time.

E H Ramsden, in his article The Halo: "A Further Enquiry into Its Origin"[17] took this further to open the debate on how much Zoroaster's religion influenced Christianity, linking the nimbus and halo directly to the Persian *hvareno*, with its origins in the Indus Valley. Egypt is merely referenced as also having used sun-motifs.

The Official Roman Catholic Online Encyclopaedia, New Advent, states that the Nimbus/Halo originated in the East where "The custom of the Egyptian and Syrian kings of having themselves represented with a rayed crown to indicate the status of demigods, spread throughout the East and the West" (www.newadvent.org/cathen/11080b.htm) It goes on to say that "According to the exhaustive researches of Stephani it [the Nimbus as symbol in Art] was an invention of the Hellenic epoch."

The final nail in the coffin for Egypt's Sun-disk to have had anything to do with the Christian/Eastern nimbus is the fact that the Sun-disk is exclusively worn on the head in ancient Egyptian Art and never behind the head as is the traditional halo and nimbus. The difference is clearly illustrated in the images below:

[16] The Art Amateur, Vol. 3, No. 6 (Nov., 1880), pp. 125-127

[17] The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs, Vol. 78, No. 457 (Apr., 1941), pp. 123-127+131

Figure 6.8: Traditional usage of the halo/nimbus – Saint John the Evangelist by Segna di Buonaventura ca 1320 AD, Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/437651, accessed 6 Nov 2015

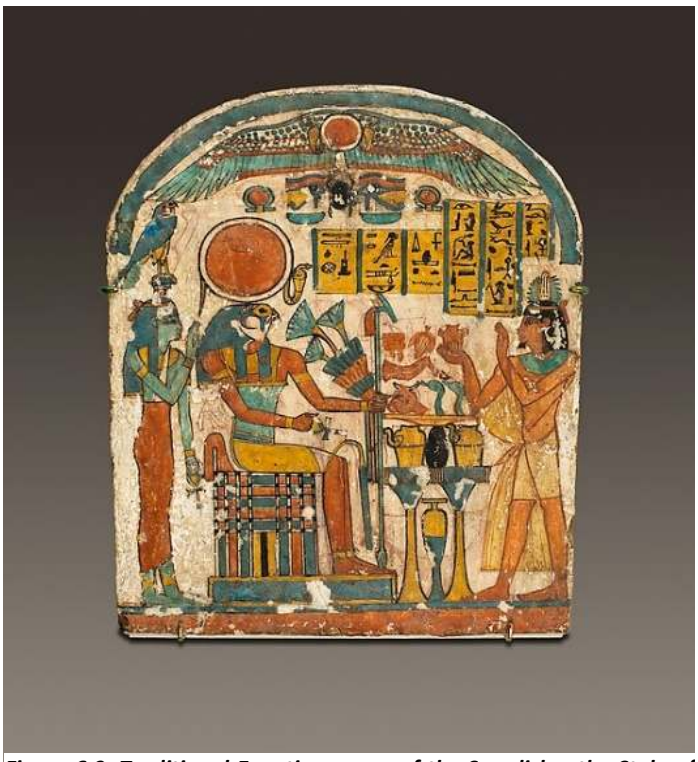

Figure 6.9: Traditional Egyptian usage of the Sun-disk – the Stela of Saiah, 22nd Dynasty 825-712 BC Tomb MMA 801 at Deir el-Bahri/Thebes (www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/550806, accessed 6 Nov 2015)

In the figures above it can clearly be seen that the ancient Egyptians used the Sun-Disk in a different way to the ancient Greeks and Europe. On the Stela of Saiah, a priest of Amun during the 22nd Dynasty, the two most popular versions of the ancient Egyptian Sun-disk is shown in their typical forms: the Sun-disk with the cobra on Ra's head, identifying this figure as Ra, and the Winged Sun-disk over the whole scene. In contrast, the painting of Saint John the Evangelist by Segna di Buonaventura is typical of the Greek and European usage of the Halo/Nimbus; the disk is situated behind the head to show sainthood, not godhood.

We can therefore safely say that the most "obvious" links between modern/Christian art and ancient Egyptian art, is in fact, none at all. This once again points to the phenomenon where things are unambiguously linked to ancient Egypt by popular thought to make it more mystical or to give it a better origin story.

6.3.1.2 Wadjet Eye like art

The *Wadjet Eye* has slipped into the world of secular art as a mystical or abstract symbol. Here we look at Leon Battista Alberti's Winged Eye and a more modern concept art exhibition, titled "The Eye of Horus: Itineraries in the Mathematical Imagination". We will also look at by Fabrizio Clerici and some of his pieces from his "Variazioni Tebane" collection, inspired by ancient Egyptian symbolism.

6.3.1.2.1 Leon Battista Alberti

Leon Battista Alberti was an Early Renaissance artist, philosopher, architect and thinker active from about 1418 until his death in 1472. He was regarded as the prototype "Renaissance Man" and father of modern architectural theory and thought (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2010 "Battista Alberti, Leon"). He studied Greek and Roman literature extensively, and so came to know about ancient Egyptian symbolism as well (Schneider 1990:263).

Alberti was fond of the idea that the two-headed Roman god, Janus, portrayed: the ability to look into past and future, and to bring the two together. This he attempts to do in his works. (Schneider 1990:264) Of particular importance to us, however, is how Alberti brought ancient Egypt, especially the Eye iconography, into the world of the renaissance, and thus more "modern" art. In this regard Mateo de' Pasti's *Medallion Portrait of Alberti*, and a self-portrait, both containing the singular "Winged Eye" symbol device is of interest to our study. Shown below, these pieces of art show a stylised "Winged Eye", which could possibly, be related to the *Wadjet Eye*.

Figure 6.10: Mateo de' Pasti's Medallion Portrait of Leon Battista Alberti (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection)

Figure 6.11: Leon Battista Alberti Self Portrait plaque (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection)

These pieces of Early renaissance art are, perhaps, the most singular of the artistic productions recounted here, as they seem to portray a relatively modern interpretation of ancient Egyptian symbolism, drawing directly from the artist's, and that of his mentor and subject Alberti's, understanding of ancient Egypt. (Schneider 1990:264) The symbolism is not exact, however, and we must be careful to jump to conclusions based purely on the fact that Alberti knew ancient Egyptian iconography (italianrenaissanceresources.com/, accessed 25 July 2015, Schneider 1990:265). The eye in the symbol is said to represent the equation "sun = eye = king = God", based on Horapollo's Hieroglyphics, which Alberti knew (Schneider 1990:264). Alberti draws this from the ancient Egyptians, saying "*They carved an Eye, by which they understood God; a Vulture*

for Nature; a Bee for King; a Circle for Time; an Ox for Peace, and the like" (Alberti 1485:560[18]) And explains the symbolism in his play, *Anuli*, saying that the Eye is God, the wreath a "*symbol of joy and glory*" and that the wings portray the qualities of the Eye, it being "*more powerful than anything, swifter, more worthy… the first, chief, king, like a god of human parts*", going on to link it to the "*ancients*" believing God to be like an eye (Mancini 1890:224-230, quoted in Watkins 1960:257-258).

As Schneider notes, Alberti was familiar with the work of Aelian, a Second Century A.D. writer who stated that "eagles had the keenest eye-sight among birds" and went on to connect this to why the ancient Egyptians used falcons extensively to represent Horus and Ra (Schneider 1990:265). Considering Alberti's knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphs, albeit indirectly, it stands to reason that he copied the *Wadjet Eye*'s iconography and symbolism as he understood it in its representation of Horus the Falcon god of ancient Egypt. The feathered wings also bring the Winged Sun-disk to mind, though there is no evidence that Alberti had direct knowledge of or contact with Egyptian symbols in their original forms, only through his studies of Greek literature, which did not seem too interested in the winged Sun-disk.

The Winged Eye remains, however, a very abstract and symbolism-rich symbol that is comparable on an ideological and symbolic level with the *Wadjet Eye*.

6.3.1.2.2 The Eye of Horus: Itineraries in the Mathematical Imagination

In 1989 Italy hosted a special art and science exhibition called "*L'occhio di Horus: Itinerari nell'immaginario matematico*" (The Eye of Horus: Itineraries in the Mathematical Imagination). It was a purely science and art-based show, aimed at "spreading the culture of mathematics" (Emmer 1991:355) amongst a generation that was generally ignorant of mathematics and its applications.

The Eye of Horus/*Wadjet Eye* was used as symbol because it "had a precise mathematical significance for the Egyptians" (Emmer 1991:355) The symbolism and iconography of the *Wadjet Eye* was therefore used in one of its original meanings, though not forms. Figure 6.12 below

[18] English Publication of Alberti's *De Re Aedifica* by Edward Owen in 1755

shows the showpiece and official image of the exhibition, titled "*Teoria cromatica degli sguardi*" by Fabrizio Clerici. The "Eye of Horus" is portrayed in the shape of a sparrow to the right.

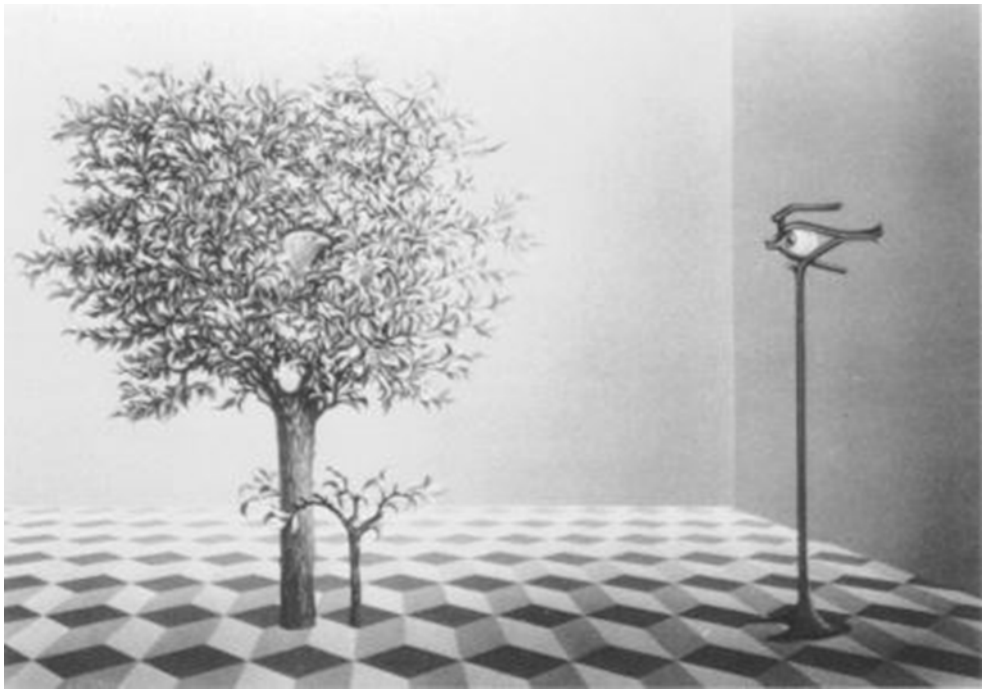

Figure 6.12: **Teoria cromatica degli sguardi *1974***

6.3.1.2.3 Fabrizio Clerici: Variazioni Tebane

Clerici's original work of the *Teoria cromatica degli sguardi* in his *Variazioni Tebane* collection looks somewhat different, and more like its inspiration, the *Wadjet Eye*, as seen in Figure 6.13 below.

Figure 6.13: **Teoria cromatica degli sguardi *as it appeared in* Variazioni Tebane *(image from Google Image Search, accessed 5 Nov 2015.***

In this collection, Clerici seems fond of the *Wadjet Eye* as inspiration, placing his version of it on his cover page (Figure 6.14) and using the "Eye" theme in other pieces of the collection as seen in Figure 6.15 and Figure 6.16 below.

Figure 6.14: Cover page of the 1984 Variazioni Tebane collection (image from Google Image Search, accessed 5 Nov 2015)

Figure 6.15: The Trinity's Gaze – 1973 (image from Google Image Search, accessed 5 Nov 2015)

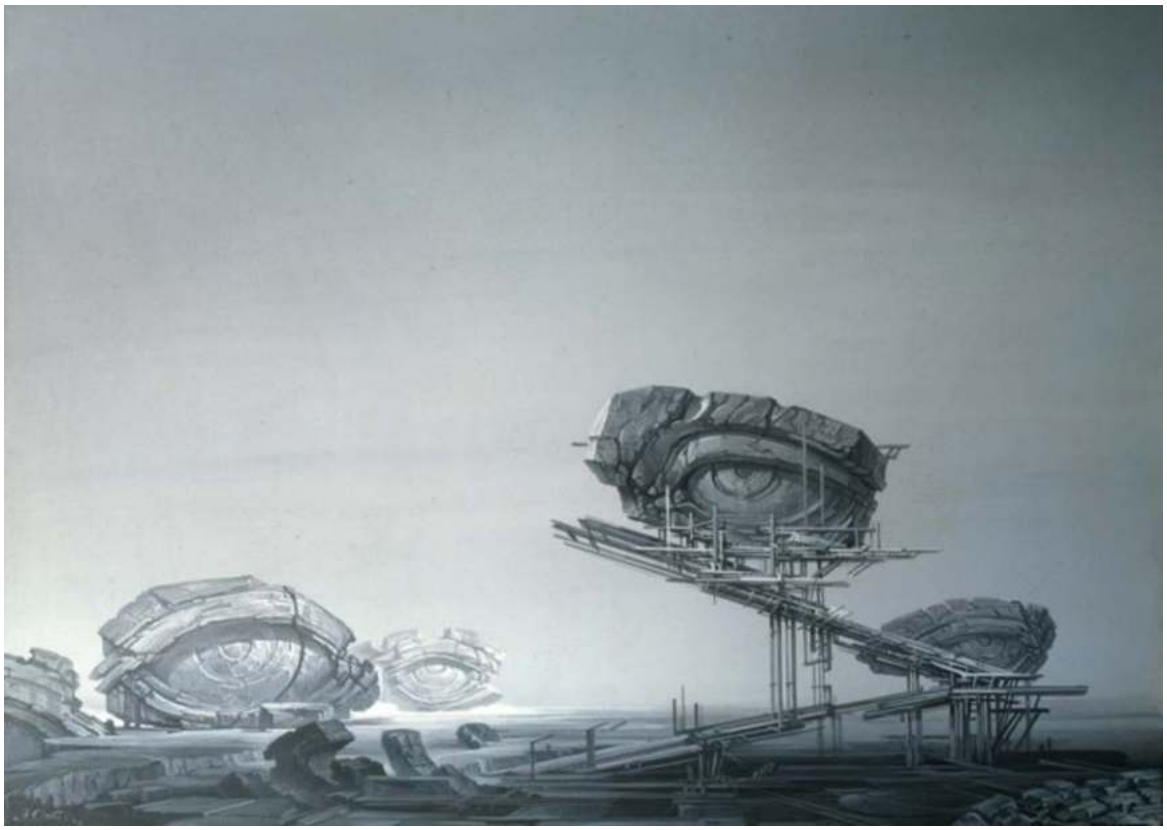

Figure 6.16: **Otica Zodiacale** *("Eyes of the Zodiac") – 1973 (image from Google Image Search, accessed 5 Nov 2015)*

The latter two pictures, The Trinity's Gaze (Figure 6.15) and Ottica Zodiacale (Figure 6.16), both are reminiscent of the theme that Leon Battista Alberti explored; that the Eye represented God. This is in line with Clerici's thinking and work, as Xenia Muratova remarks that he is, "Grown up in the… metaphysical orientations of Italian painting and in tune with its spirit of enigmatic contemplation and Melancholy". (Muratova 1977:732) This ties in with Alberti's work and usage of the Eye (see the section on Alberti above) and seems to reflect the abstract and almost mystical property of the *Wadjet Eye* on which it is based.

6.3.1.3 Egyptian revival

We looked at Leon Batista Alberti and how he used the symbolism of the *Wadjet eye* in his life's work, and how this same iconography was applied by Fabrizio Clerici. However, these examples are few and far between during the renaissance proper. Alberti's life (1418-1472AD) coincides with the discovery and re-publication of ancient texts, such as Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Strabo's *De situ orbis*, that brought ancient Egypt into the minds of Europeans and sparked the first forms of an Egyptian revival that would later influence art and architecture and become known as "Egyptiomania". (Dannenfeldt 1959:7-8)

Although the early interest in Egypt seems to have been mostly academic and literary, Horapollon's *Hieroglyphica* and other classical sources piqued interest in ancient Egyptian symbolism, especially their unique writing system. (Dannenfeldt 1959:10) Europeans believed that the hieroglyphic script of ancient Egypt contained hidden and secret knowledge of magic and philosophies. (Dannenfeldt 1959:11) This led to the view that Egypt was a land of mystery and intrigue, hidden knowledge and power. (Muhlestein 2004:137-139) A view that would affect the arts in Europe until the present age.

These ideas also influenced the performing arts with music and theatre pieces such as Mozart's "Magic Flute" and Verdi's "Aida" featuring sets and themes with ancient Egyptian symbols and motifs on them. In fact, Rehding (2014) argues that the very foundations of modern musical theory, founded in works such as *Musurgia Universalis* and Athanasius Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, both from the 1650's AD, come from the Europeans theorizing about the origins of musicality and the ancient Egyptian's primary role in its dissemination to other areas. (Rehding 2014:6-30).

Music and its abstract symbolism and ideology is, however, outside the scope of this study, even though it does influence culture in many physical ways. These can also form the basis for further research in the topic.

During the late 18th to 19th centuries the Egyptian Revival and accompanying "Egyptomania" that grew from the renaissance, flourished. This affected the styles of ordinary household items such as chairs, textiles and interior decorations, jewellery and architecture. (Ickow 2012:1)

6.3.1.3.1 Household items

Due to the revival of ancient Egyptian styles, many everyday household goods were produced in Europe with ancient Egyptian motifs and symbols copied from the murals and images that came back after Napoleon's campaigns and the research and travels of Europeans to Egypt to see the land for themselves. Some elements of European art and design were even influenced by physical artefacts, such as furniture and religious devices. (Esposito 2003:81) Ancient Egyptian furniture was copied and adapted to European uses, many with ancient Egyptian themes worked on them. (Esposito 2003:90)

Figure 6.17 & 6.18 below show a section of a photolithograph of a catalogue of furniture available for sale in 1975 England. Notice the ancient Egyptian scenes and symbols copied from the original material in Egypt, especially in Figure 6.18.

Figure 6.17: Part A of a photolithograph from The Building News, 5 November 1875

Figure 6.18: Part B of a photolithograph from The Building News, 5 November 1875

Figure 6.19 below shows a home-made art screen from Victorian England. Notice how the scenes are a copy of the same kinds of scenes we see in ancient Egypt, when compared to the figures in Chapter 5.

Figure 6.19: 1880s Victorian Egyptian Revival Folk Art Screen, Appliqued Cloth[19]

This blatant copying of whole scenes shows that it was done for the aesthetics of the image with little or no understanding of the images and symbols that are copied. However, it also meant that ancient Egyptian symbols were commonplace for the people of the time.

[19] From http://blog.eriebasin.com/post/1116814626/1880s-victorian-egyptian-revival-folk-art-screen.

There are many such examples from Victorian England. Those shown here are only to illustrate the point. There are whole Pinterest pages dedicated to these Victorian copies of ancient Egyptian art and symbolism, such as:

- https://za.pinterest.com/pin/422986589973170936/
- https://za.pinterest.com/Auntliizabetty/egyptian-revival/

6.3.1.3.2 Jewellery

Jewellery is a visible, and usually proudly displayed, part of a person's attire. Ancient Egyptian-themed jewellery would definitely be an eye-catcher and as people were drawn to the attention and mystique promised by ancient Egyptian themes, so these themes and symbols became a part of European culture.

During Victorian times jewellers such as Carlo Giuliano, Fromet-Meurice and Boucheron Mellerio used Egyptian Revival styles in their jewellery ranges. Scarabs and winged figures were common, as subjects. (Ickow 2012:1) Figure 6.20 below shows a brooch of Sapphire, Ruby and gold from Victorian Era-Austria.

Figure 6.20: Scarab brooch from the 1880's Austria, unknown jeweller.

Though a bit stylized, the ancient Egyptian style and form is kept and it looks like something someone from the royal household on ancient Egypt would wear. The following images (Figures 6.21, 6.22, 6.23, 6.24 & 6.25) show some Egyptian revival designs from 1875 to 1926.

Figure 6.21: Winged scarab beetle from 1875, unknown jeweller, possible Carlo Giuliano

Figure 6.22: Wadjet eye brooch from Victorian England.

Figure 6.23: Egyptian bracelet, 1924 Van Cleef & Arpel's.

Figure 6.24: Design of an Egyptian clip, 1924 Van Cleef & Arpel's.

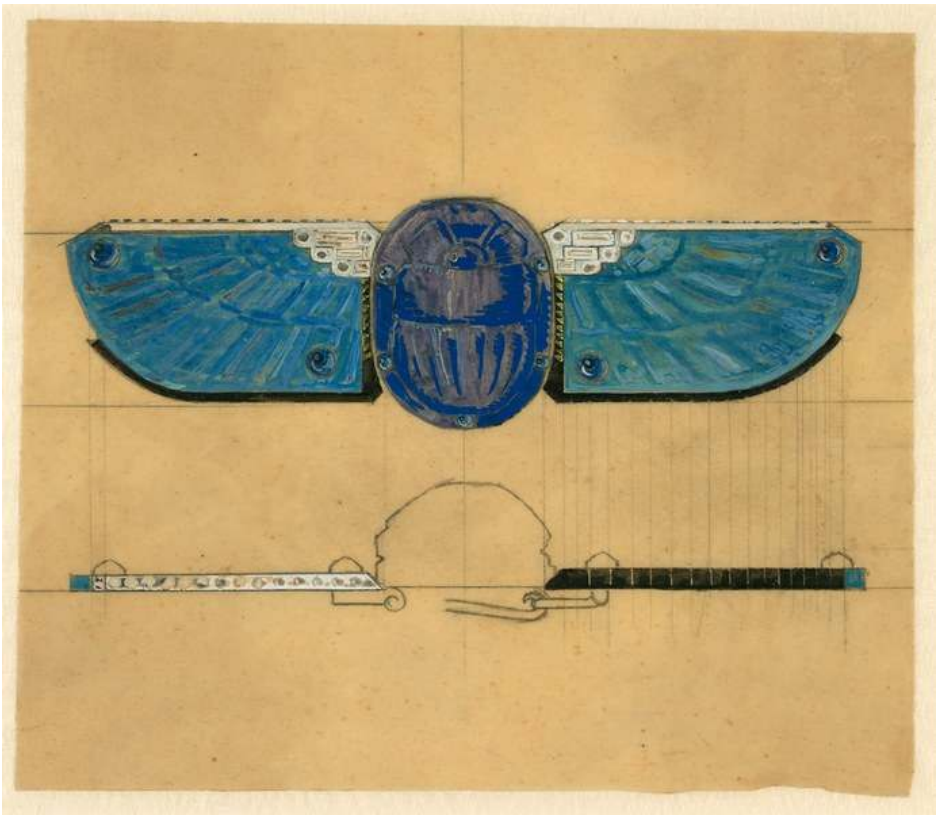

Figure 6.25: Design of a jewelled belt in the shape of a winged scarab, 1926 Cartier.

These designs all show features of ancient Egyptian culture as part of the styling, not really moving away from ancient Egyptian symbols. Through wearing these at social gatherings people spread ancient Egyptian culture and popularized its use. Even today Cartier offers Egyptian Revival themed jewellery, such as the Horus-themed bracelet in Figure 6.26.

Figure 6.26: Gold and diamond Horus-themed bracelet, Cartier 1990-1999 collection.

6.3.1.3.3 Architecture

One of the most tangible effects of the Egyptian revival is the "Egyptian Revival" style in architecture. This style developed in the early 1800's in Europe and the USA during a time when newly formed countries and governments sought to create monuments and buildings that reflected their national status and pride. (Cothren 2004:428) Officially, "Egyptian Revival" is known as a minor architectural revival that was an offshoot of the Greek/Classical revival style that was much more prevalent (and which the USA adopted with much fervour). (Eckels 1950:164-165) This is perhaps why it is not as well-known as the other styles nor as well-covered and studied.

The Egyptian Revival style was characterised by the use of ancient Egyptian-looking façades and symbols on buildings as well as lots of obelisks, some left over from Roman times (such as the ancient Egyptian Obelisk of Domitian in the Piazza Navona) and some European copies of ancient

Egyptian ones. Rome itself has thirteen such obelisks, some Egyptian, some Roman or European copies (Such as the one in Saint Peter's Piazza).

In 1808 the first Library of Congress was designed using the Egyptian Revival style, but it was lost when the British destroyed Washington in 1814. Figure 6.27 below shows one of the first American monument built in Egyptian Revival style; the Baltimore Battle Monument built in 1827. (Wischnitzer 1951:62)

Figure 6.27: Baltimore Battle Monument in Baltimore, Maryland. Notice the Egyptian style base and stonework reminiscent of ancient Egyptian buildings, even though the tower itself has a Greek/Renaissance feel to it.

In Britain, the "Egyptian Hall" was built in 1815 as a museum for William Bullock's curiosities from around the world and was later used for lectures, art exhibitions and even historical and cultural exhibitions. In 1821 Giovanni Belzoni's exhibition of Seti I's tomb was hosted here, and later all sorts of curiosities such as people with curious anatomies (super-anorexic people, dwarves and Siamese twins). Because of all this it was also known as "England's Home of Mystery", something once again reinforced by the ancient Egyptian symbolism, as it seems, was the plan. (Walford

1897[20]) Figure 6.28 below shows an old picture of the building with its posters advertising "England's home of Mystery".

Figure 6.28: The Egyptian Hall at number 22 Piccadilly Street.

Notice the Egyptian geometric designs and the Winged Sun Disks in their proper positions, albeit quite over done with the two sets for each "window". In the middle a Scarab with bursting sunrays is supported by two feline sphinxes, something that uses Egyptian motifs and symbolism in a western way to magnify its magnificence. This style is quite representative of the motivations and "look" of the "Egyptian Revival" period.

This trend even ended up in Russia where the "Egyptian Gate of Tsarskoye Selo" was built in 1829 as part of the expansion of the "Tsarskoye Selo", or "Tsar's Village" where the former Tsar of Russia and his family lived. The style was chosen because the Russians wanted to show support

[20] Excerpt from "http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/EgyptianHallPiccadilly.htm"

for the growing academic research into ancient Egypt, especially hieroglyphics. The gates are covered in hieroglyphics and Egyptian figures, modelled by professor Demut-Malinovsky after the ancient Egyptian Temple of Khonsu. (From http://www.alexanderpalace.org/2006tsarskoe/feodorovsky.html)

Figure 6.29: The "Egyptian Gate of Tsarskoye Selo" showing the ancient Egyptian-inspired reliefs.

The Jews also seemed to have embraced the Egyptian revival with synagogues and graves in Europe featuring this style. During the height of the Egyptian revival period Jewish synagogues were designed with many Egyptian motifs and styles, which is quite ironic considering the history of the Jews in Egypt. (Appelbaum 2012:7) This was due to the freeing of the Jews from under Ottoman rule by Napoleon during his 1798 campaign. (Wischnitzer 1951:62) The Egyptian elements are included to celebrate this and to discover a unique Jewish aesthetic that would incorporate the mystique and rich history of ancient Egypt. (Appelbaum 2012:21)

One of the earliest such synagogues is the "Mikve Israel" in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, built in 1824. (Wischnitzer 1951:64) The fact that one of the first synagogues to use the Egyptian style

was built around the same time as the Baltimore Battle memorial (Figure 6.27 above), shows that the Jews were not only following a local trend in the USA and Europe, but also getting involved in its creation. Figure 6.30 below shows this synagogue.

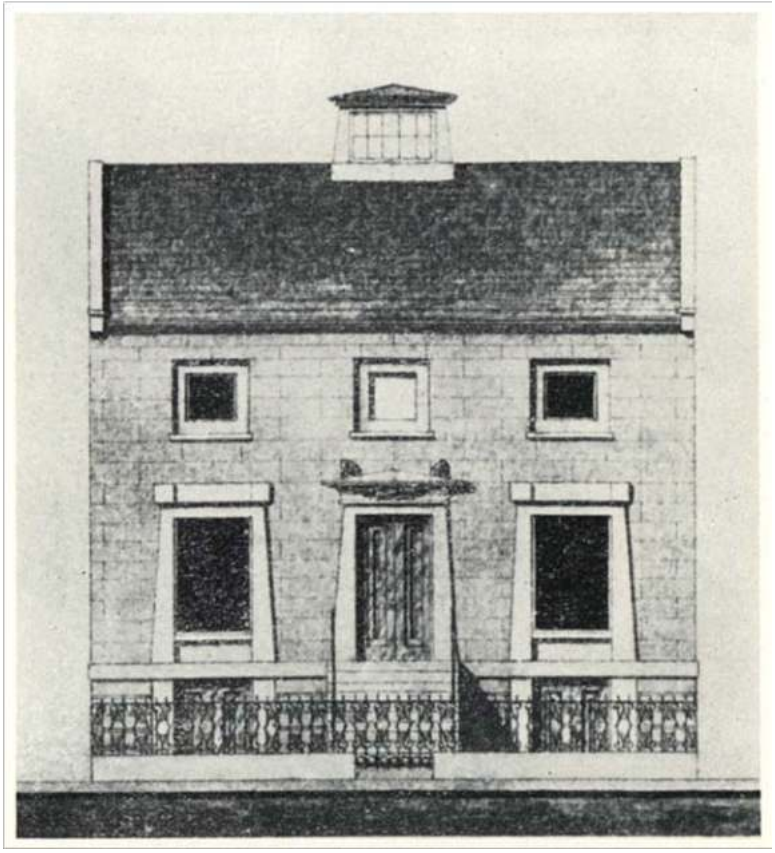

Figure 6.30: The: Mikve Israel" synagogue in Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Notice the Egyptian Wings above the door and the Egyptian Style windows, which are particular to the Egyptian Revival style.

During the course of the investigation Scotland, of all places, came up several times with regards to Egyptian Revival architecture. On this subject John A. Packer gained his PhD in Architecture from The University of Edinburgh in 2012. His work is similar in scope and field to this one, though much more specialised and complete in its niche.

Packer discusses the rise and usage of Egyptian motifs in Scotland and points towards the many different uses of the symbol on Scottish national Architecture. He points out how many obelisks and pyramid forms were incorporated into buildings constructed between the late 1700s and the mid-1800s. Temple facades from ancient Egypt were copied extensively, as was the skyline

of ancient Egypt. He attributes Scotland's copying of ancient Egypt to a strong sense of nationalism and their origin myth. This myth, recounted in the Scottish histories known as the "Scotichronicon", and in earlier Scottish works, tells of an Egyptian princess called Skota that invaded the British Isles and from whom the Scots descent (Packer 2012:1-2). Whether this myth reflects reality or not, of particular interest to us in this study is what happened as a result of that myth. The buildings that exhibit Egyptian Architecture are extensive and widespread anywhere Scottish influence was, as Packer points out (2012:3-5). Of interest to us are the buildings that exhibit the Winged Sun-disk, which are listed below (images from my own research).

The previous home of the Royal Bank of Scotland, 3 Hope Street, Edinburgh has a Winged Sun-disk above its third floor window, seen below in Figure 6.31.

Figure 6.31: Winged Sun-disk on the building at 2/3 Hope Street Edinburgh (https://www.google.co.za/maps/place/3+Hope+St,+Edinburgh+EH2,+UK/@55.9504155,-3.2080173,3a,19.4y,83.36h,136.46t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1stfxsAGpKFUtSZaBbZ6V0JQ!2e0!6s%2F%2Fgeo0.ggpht.com%2Fcbk%3Fpanoid%3DtfxsAGpKFUtSZaBbZ6V0JQ%26output%3Dthumbnail%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26thumb%3D2%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D91.314293%26pitch%3D0!7i13312!8i6656!4m2!3m1!1s0x4887c7bd485abc0d:0x37b57fd86c175ade, accessed 11 Nov 2015)

Packard goes on to mention that graves dating from between the early and mid-1800s have symbolism based on Malachi 4:2a: "*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*"[21]. This verse immediately brings to mind the Winged Sun-disk, and it is no wonder that the sculptors of the gravestones used this particular

[21] King James Version, from TheWord Bible e-Library

symbol (Packer 2012:107-108). The images are, however, unclear as the inscriptions have long since faded.

Another memorial/tomb is the one in St. Mungo's Cathedral in Glasgow, dedicated to the Highland Light Infantry (74th) Regiment of the British Army. This regiment fought in the 1882 Egyptian Campaign and lost 24 men at the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir, a decisive battle in the war. The themes are Egyptian, with a large sphinx sitting atop the memorial and a Winged Sun-disk over the inscription (Figure 6.32 & Figure 6.33 below).

Figure 6.32: Front view of the St. Mungo's Cathedral Highland Light Infantry memorial (Moyes 2011 – posted on 10th August 2011 on clydeside-images.blogspot.co.za/2011/08/war-memorials-within-glasgow-cathedral.html, accessed 6 Nov 2015)

Figure 6.33: Detail of Figure 6.32 clearly showing the Winged Sun-disk.

In his thesis, Packer also mentions the painting of "Bute Furnaces, Rhymney, Wales" by John Petherick, c.1830. This painting (Figure 6.34 below) shows the Rhymney Ironworks in Wales with a replica of a Theban Gate supporting a colossal Sun-disk, with the industry around it.

Figure 6.34: Bute Furnaces, Rhymney, Wales, by John Petherick, c.1830 (from Packer 2012:341).

A more physical example of the industrial complex having an ancient Egyptian façade is the Temple Mills complex in Leeds based on the façade of the Esna temple in Egypt, built in 1837.

Figure 6.35: Façade of the Temple Mills in Leeds, with the two Winged Sun-disks clearly visible

The Guardian, ran an article titled "For ever Egypt - a northern temple to industry is at serious risk", detailing how the Temple Mills, an old Flax Spinning factory, is becoming unstable due to a lack of maintenance and care (www.theguardian.com – Wainwright 2011, accessed 11 Nov 2015). This brings us to the main objective of any study in history – the protection and conservation of Heritage. These buildings are perhaps re-imaginings of ancient Egypt, but they attest to the long and continued legacy that ancient Egypt has had on European culture, and world culture. Losing these magnificent buildings, engineered to look like ancient Egyptian ones in both scale and façades, will be an enormous loss to heritage in general, and specifically our links to our precursor cultures.

This era of Egyptianising ended in 1858 with a strong return to more gothic and English styles.

6.3.2 Modern Pop Culture

Popular culture is driven by artists, especially musicians, and whatever they do or wear becomes an acceptable part of culture. It is therefore important for us to look at how ancient Egyptian symbols are perceived and used by these artists, who are followed by millions. Here we will look at images of some pop-culture artists as a sample of how ancient Egyptian symbols are used. Looking at images usually not seen in an academic work is part of the nature of this study.

Being trendsetters, there are always artists and performers who try to stand out and make a statement by being different, and using ancient or mystical settings and symbols is a sure way of attracting attention. Sometimes they are so different or revolutionary that they become the

symbol of pop culture for a season. Other times they are so uniquely revolting and challenging of social norms that they become the sum of everything conservatives, and even some liberals, despise. These artists will use and misuse artistic/poetic license to make a name for themselves, to stand out and make their message heard. During the 80's and 90's, this was synonymous with names like Britney Spears or Madonna. Today Miley Cyrus and Lady Gaga make these artists look like prudes.

This is, however, not a discussion of modern day principles and morals in the music industry. In this study we are concerned with how these people stand out, which symbols they use and in which contexts do they implement them. The best place to look for symbols is in music videos and live performances. These are graphic skits or images that accompany the original music and usually add some more flavour to it. This is also where many artists insert something special to them about the song, or some symbolism that has significance.

Of note here is Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, popularly known as "Lady Gaga", who just cannot do anything without symbols or something symbolic literally hanging from her. On her "Judas" video, she wore *Wadjet Eye*s painted with makeup over her eyes, as part of the song's anti-institution and anti-Christian theme. Her character, Mary Magdalene, is shown as Biker-King Jesus's girlfriend, but she lusts after his second-in-command, Judas. The *Wadjet Eye* is used as a shocking statement that the biblical reformed and chaste Mary would be wearing a symbol everyone recognises as ancient Egyptian, and betraying the One who saved her for the one who betrayed Him.

Figure 6.36: A still from the Music Video of Judas (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wagn8Wrmzuc, accessed 11 Nov 2015)

A conspiracy website, www.vigilantcitizen.com, notes that Gaga's use of the Eye of Horus together with the video's turning of the biblical narrative links with Occultist Aleister Crowley's teachings about "the age of Horus". He said "… the Age of Horus, a new stage in human history, would be defined by the abandonment of traditional religions in order to embrace a new kind of spirituality…" (vigilantcitizen.com/musicbusiness/lady-gagas-judas-and-the-age-of-horus/, accessed 10 Nov 2015 & Crowly 1904) Given the rest of the video's Occultic and Satanist symbolism, there is little doubt that there is a clear link between the two, where traditional cultural and religious norms are shunned in favour of personal spirituality. Naming this phenomenon after an ancient Egyptian god falls within the realm of "Egyptomania" again, where ancient Egypt is associated to something to legitimise it. Historically, Horus had nothing to do with personal spiritualism, rather standing for the return of the social and religious structure, defeating the "enemies" of Ra and himself. Calling this the "Age of Seth" would have been much more accurate.

However, the most "Egyptian" and symbolic of all music videos so far, with more than 1,488,777,161 views to date (08 August 2016 updated, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KSOMA3QBU0), is Katy Perry's Dark Horse. It casts Katy Perry as "Katy Patra", a magical Egyptian queen approached by all sorts of suitors. The video starts off where she is on a sun barque with a *Wadjet Eye* in the prow and a stylized winged sun-

disk on the roof. (Figure 6.37 below). The *Wadjet Eye* is also used in a rather interesting way later on in the video. In addition to our symbols, there is a ton of symbolism in the video, including pyramids, Egyptian magic, the sun barque and various gods and goddesses, most notably Isis, into which "Katy Patra" changes at the end. What follows is a quick scan and screenshots of our three symbols in the music video (I downloaded the video from YouTube in HD and took screenshots using a video editing program to preserve the quality.).

Figure 6.37: Katy Perry on the Sun Barque showing the Winged Sun-disk on top with the Wadjet Eye on the prow of the barque

Figure 6.38: Katy Perry's wig with Wadjet Eye symbols printed onto it.

Figure 6.39: Front view of the same scene as the previous image, shows Katy Perry's eyes, with her right (image left) eye made up like a Wadjet Eye.

Figure 6.40: Katy Perry inspecting a huge diamond through a Wadjet Eye.

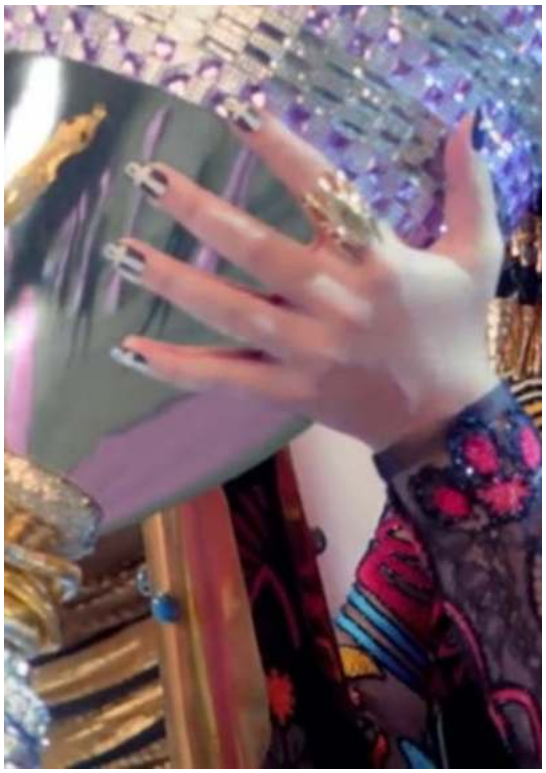

Figure 6.41:* Ankh *signs on Katy Perry's fingers.

Figure 6.42: Notice the Sun-Disk in the background reminiscent of ancient Egyptian murals.

These six images are by no means exhaustive of the ancient Egyptian symbolism in the video. However, detailing every one of the many symbols in the video would be time consuming and wandering quite off the topic. This video has been both praised (Time) and criticized (Huffington Post) by popular media. In the Time article Katy Perry explains why she chose an Egyptian theme for her video, saying that she wanted it to be a nod towards ancient cultures and chose ancient Egypt's Memphis, since her collaborator in the video, Juicy J, is from Memphis Tennessee, which is named after Memphis, Egypt [sic]. Professor Robert K. Ritner from the University of Chicago and Professor David P. Silverman of the University of Pennsylvania and Curator of the Penn Museum's Egyptian Section both pointed out a long list of ancient Egyptian facts and concepts that is accurately portrayed in the video (time.com/9233/katy-perry-dark-horse-egypt/). Added to this, the whole fantasy-mythological feel of the video lends itself to the notion that ancient Egypt is this mystical magical place. This was further elaborated on by Katy Perry and her director Matthew Cullen in the "Making of" video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xC4AeqxwJy4).

It is clear from the video and the stills that Katy Perry only used recognisable ancient Egyptian symbols in a fun way in her video. However, they are all used in their "almost original" context, with the exception of the *ankh*'s on her fingers. The phrase "almost original" is applicable, because this was for fun. None of these symbols were meant to convey anything more than a solid "authentic "link to ancient Egypt. There are, however, no cultural or symbolic connotations

other than to ancient Egypt, according to Cullen, who goes on to state that Katy Perry is not a Neo-Pagan or Freemason for using any of these images, as both these groups got their symbolism from ancient Egypt (time.com/9233/katy-perry-dark-horse-egypt/). This use of symbols has also led to many other writers lashing out against Katy Perry for being insensitive towards her cultural sources, including melting a pendant that spelt "Allah" in Arabic (mic.com/articles/95444/5-reasons-katy-perry-is-pop-music-s-worst-cultural-appropriator, www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/katy-perry-angers-muslims-burning-allah-pendant-dark-horse-video-article-1.1702801).

Other celebrities have also been seen wearing the *ankh*, most notably (and recently), Demi Lovato (Figure 6.43 below) and Rihanna (Figure 6.44 below).

Figure 6.43: Demi Lovato wearing an ankh and cross to the Cosmopolitan Awards.

Figure 6.44: Rihanna at a show wearing a necklace of Ankhs at the 2012 MTV music awards.

This appearance by Rihanna has sparkled a whole line of jewellery in the ancient Egyptian mould for her fans. This is exemplified clearly at the Zara Taylor boutique in London, where the line comes with the tag line "*EGYPTIAN INSPIRED JEWELLERY AT ZARA TAYLOR LONDON - you'll be in great company as many celebrities love to rock the Egyptian trend too!*" (www.evolve-magazine.com/2014/12/egyptian-inspired-jewellery-zara-taylor-london/&ww.luxorcouture.com/index.php/component/virtuemart/sets/rihanna-inspired-*ankh*-necklace-set-detail?Itemid=0 both accessed on 26/07/2015).

Other Celebrities that use ancient Egypt as a reference has been Beyoncé and Lady Gaga, though they do not use the Egyptian symbolism and symbols so blatantly. In a different scene, where blatant occult imagery is more popular, the symphonic/black/death metal band Kamelot used the *ankh* and the *Wadjet Eye* along with many other occult imagery on the CD cover of their CD titled "The Fourth Legacy", seen below in Figure 6.45.

Figure 6.45: Kamelot's The Fourth Legacy CD Cover (www.kamelot.com/site/release/the-fourth-legacy/, accessed 5 November 2015)

The *ankh* is clearly visible on the right, and closer inspection reveals a *Wadjet Eye* on the woman's veil. The symbolism here is only used as occult and mystical connotations, strengthening the "alternative" nature of the band.

Interestingly enough, Swedish band *Ace of Base*'s *The Sign* uses the *Ankh* in its music video. This is quite interesting as the song's lyrics are "*I got a new life… I saw the sign*", flashing the *Ankh* with the *was* sceptre and *djed* pillar stack, as we saw originally used in ancient Egypt in connection with Ptah (seen in Figure 5.6 in the previous chapter) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d73tiBBzvFM).

Their use of the *Ankh* can be seen in Figure 6.46 on the next page. There is a clear play between the lyrics "*I saw the sign*", the song's message about a girl who found a new life after breaking up with a boyfriend, and the "life" symbolism of the sign of the *Ankh*. The metaphor of seeing the signs to move on and then showing The Sign for life is quite an interesting and informed play on the meaning of the ankh and the fact that it is a sign. This usage is quite interesting, as the band is from Sweden, with no connection to ancient Egypt as such. The band was popular during

the 1990's, and wrote several top hits, including *The Sign*. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ace_of_Base)

Figure 6.46: Screenshot from Ace of Base's The Sign, from the official video on YouTube

In the image above one can clearly see the *ankh*, as well as the detailed *djed* and *was* pillar as used by the ancient Egyptians (see Figure 5.6). This indicates a deeper understanding of the Egyptian context of the symbol than the other artists mentioned here, and may reflect on a cultural phenomenon where older European bands use more realistic symbolism than their American counterparts (for instance ABBA referencing real history in their songs and the Beatles singing about real events, as quick examples).

6.3.3 Video Games

Video games are one of the most popular and common entertainment and relaxation products in modern culture. For myself this is a great hobby and games like *Age of Empires* have instilled a great love for the ancient and history since I was 10 years old and started playing. Games such as *Age of Empires* (Ensemble 1997), *Rome: Total War I&II* (The Creative Assembly 2004 & 2013), the *Civilization* Series (Firaxis 2001 & 2005) and other strategy games of the same type all have

ancient Egypt as an interacting/playable nation and use the *ankh* or *Wadjet Eye* as national symbol for the Egyptian Faction. Through these games many people come into "direct" contact with ancient Egypt and its culture, in many cases quite true to history.

In both instalments of *Rome: Total War* one can (and in many cases must) build Egyptian temples to Egyptian gods to appease the populace. Each temple grants bonuses and abilities in line with the patron deity (The Creative Assembly 2004 & 2013). For instance, as vanquisher, the temple of Horus grants combat bonuses, the temple of Imhotep grants architectural bonuses (building strength and build speed) and the temple of Isis (coupled with Osiris) grants agricultural bonuses (The Creative Assembly 2004 & 2013).

However, none of these games use the Egyptian symbols for more than aesthetic and artistic value. In fact, almost no game uses any of the ancient Egyptian symbols outside of decorative or associative contexts (www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/goodoldreviews/12842-Good-Old-Editorial-Ancient-Egypt-and-Historical-Settings, accessed 24 July 2015). The only games that I have come across that remotely hints at the use of the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye* as more than just a culture-specific icon, were *Age of Mythology* (where they were used as arcane weapons and spell-symbols) (Ensemble 2002) and *Assassin's Creed II*, during a video where it was revealed that the *ankh* was in fact a "Piece of Eden"; a pre-civilization piece of technology left behind by a precursor race with immense power (Ubisoft 2009). In *Assassin's Creed: Rogue* the *ankh* is again mentioned as a powerful "Piece of Eden" with the power to heal and resurrect the dead, in line with its original meanings of "life" (Ubisoft 2015). In *Rogue* it is also hinted that in a later game cycle the *ankh* might play a more important role, as the main characters are busy finding "more powerful" artefacts. There does, however, exist a book-spin-off of the game (*Assassin's Creed 2: Aquilus*) series that has a story about an artefact, called the "*ankh* of Isis", said to have healing and restorative powers (synonymous with the original meanings of the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye*). However, due to the fact that this is not part of the real story line of *Assassin's Creed*, and officially falls under "Fan Fiction", where anything can happen, I do not include it as evidence that that *ankh* is used in the game series to date, though a rumoured later version will have it (www.eurogamer.net/articles/2013-10-12-assassins-creed-4-director-wants-to-take-the-series-to-ancient-egypt, accessed 24 March 2015, gamerant.com/assassins-creed-5-setting-egypt/ accessed 12 December 2014).

Fan fiction is usually an indication of what popular culture and users of games would like to see, though it is generally not a good indication of what the majority would like, as it is one person's fantasy. This does prove, however, that ancient Egyptian motifs and concepts are popular enough amongst gamers that such games are in demand, as these articles show.

On a more indirect level, the *Nightingales* in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* have a symbol that looks remarkably similar to the image of Horus the Falcon with a sun-disk between his arched wings (Bethesda 2013). According to game lore, this symbol is a nightingale bird with the disk being a moon disk. However, its connotations as keepers of the Stealth/Thieving crafts, as well as the very peculiar placing of the symbol over the chest of the armour could demonstrate that the ancient Egyptian Sun-disk was the inspiration (Bethesda 2013).

Figure 6.47: Image showing the stylised symbol of the Nightingale order from The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (from www.steampowered.com)

Figure 6.48: Image showing the Nightingale Armour set from The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, with the Nightingale symbol on the chest.

Furthermore, the popular Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game, *Smite*, allows you to play as the gods of ancient civilizations (Hi-Rez 2014). The Egyptian Pantheon team consists of *Anhur*, *Anubis*, *Bastet*, *Geb*, *Isis*, *Khepri*, *Neith*, *Osiris*, *Ra*, *Serqet* and *Sobek*. The "team logo" can be seen in the image below.

Figure 6.49: Smite Egyptian Pantheon Team Logo (smite.gamepedia.com/Category:Egyptian_gods)

The symbolism of this image is quite true to the original, with the scarab holding up the Sun-Disk, which includes a *Wadjet Eye* as "Eye of Ra". A character screen for Ra shows this symbolism as well, using the *Wadjet Eye* as a symbol of his "Ultimate Power". It is interesting that the falcon-headed *Ra-Herakhty* is used as model for Ra. A possible reason for this is that since most images show Ra in this falcon headed form, this further shows how popular culture uses the more "popular" or "common" symbolism of ancient Egypt (Hi-Rez 2014).

Figure 6.50: Character screen for Ra (from Gameplay)

Images such as these make players aware and more familiar with ancient Egyptian symbolism. In fact, as part of the fandom of the game, these symbols are available on clothes and as "wear", such as armbands, necklaces and tattoos.

6.3.4 Movies

In movies the *Wadjet Eye* has recently played an important plot-related role in the 2013 movie "Now You See Me" and its sequel, "Now You See Me 2" where it is shown as the symbol of a secretive group that guards the integrity of magic. However, it is never shown as explicitly the only symbol, and "The Eye" is represented by many different motifs of an "Eye shape". The group is said to have its origins in ancient Egypt and as plot device in the movie the *Wadjet Eye* it is used to ground the modern group in ancient mysticism and link their magic tricks with that of

the ancient Egyptians, playing on the modern viewer's preconception of ancient Egypt being a mystical and special place.

This same idea was used in the recent "Gods of Egypt" (2016) where the eyes of Horus are used as a plot device to give Horus power and vanquish evil. However, it should be noted that this movie took Egyptian motifs and mythological elements and completely changed or mixed them with Greek ones. The eye of Horus is called "the all-seeing eye", and not once is the healing, restorative or magical elements of the original eye used. In fact, the only time when the *Wadjet Eye* as symbol features is when the left eye is stolen by a human thief from Set's treasure room and the eye is held in a container shaped like the eye. The movie shows how ancient Egyptian symbolism can be taken completely out of context and remade into a modern interpretation, using original ancient Egyptian motifs and iconography as relatable mystical symbols against which to set a modern story with modern motifs. [22]

This is a perfect example of how our modern culture interprets ancient Egypt - as this super-powered mystical ancient land where we can insert our modern stories into to give them a richer meaning.

6.4 MODERN RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Here the use of these symbols will only be looked at in terms of their religious and cultic symbolism, as opposed to their artistic and secular symbolism as discussed earlier in this chapter. As discussed in Chapter 3, the main cultural link for ancient Egyptian symbolism was religious systems. First the Greco-Roman and then the Christian religious cultural systems took on ancient Egyptian symbolisms. These have filtered down to us today in the form of the Christian faith's symbolism and the Masonic Order's fascination with Egypt. An independent development, but one that can be traced to ancient Greece is the so-called "Neo-Pagan" religions, where adherents find meaning in the gods and cults of old. Isis and her associated cults are popular amongst these groups.

[22] This movie came out after the initial submission of this dissertation and this section was only added on the recommendation of an examiner.

The Free Mason movement will not be discussed, however, since their involvement with ancient Egyptian symbolism is largely arbitrary. Gerald Massey, a Grand Master of the Masonic Order and author of *A Book of the Beginnings* (1881) is of the opinion that all manner of "high culture" in Europe evolved from Egypt. His disciple, Albert Churchward, iconographically attempts to link all civilization to ancient Egypt, especially that of the Yucatan and South American Incas (Churchward 1993). Historically, this is just ludicrous. He goes on to state that the Druids came from ancient Egypt in the pre Dynastic Era, bringing Egyptian Craft (magic) with them to Europe, to which Masons should strive (Churchward 1993:8). He also attributes the *ankh* to them twisting the swastika (Churchward 1993:187).

These assertions, while noteworthy for a study on the origin of masonic symbolism, has little to do with western culture or real ancient Egyptian symbols.

The iconography, ideology and symbolism in each of these groups does have some interesting connections to ancient Egypt. However, here we are only concerned with the three symbols. A study that would encompass all of these symbols would be too wide for the scope of a single dissertation.

We will now proceed to look at how these modern belief systems use the *ankh*, *Wadjet Eye* and Sun-disk.

6.4.1 Christianity

Though the basis of modern Christianity is the Roman Catholic Church, we are concerned here with the effect that ancient Egyptian symbolism has had on the church. The halo/nimbus has already been discussed earlier, as has the central role of Egypt and Alexandria in the beginning stages of the development of the church. Here we will look at the Coptic church and specifically their use of the *ankh* as religious symbol.

6.4.1.1 Crosses

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica there are four basic types of crosses, namely the *crux quadrata* (Greek Cross), *crux immissa* (Latin Cross), *crux commisa* (*Tau* Cross) and the *crux decussate* (diagonal Greek Cross). In addition to this, the *crux ansata*, or "*Tau* cross surmounted by a loop" is also recognised (Encyclopedia Britannica 2010 "cross"). In this study we will be looking at the *crux ansata* (*ankh*) and also examine the link between the *ankh* and the *Tau* Cross.

In western culture the *Tau* and Latin crosses are more common, and the Coptic cross/*ankh* is studied because of its uniqueness as seen below.

6.4.1.1.1 The Coptic Cross

Though not technically part of "Western" culture at all, the Coptic community in Ethiopia and Egypt are the only surviving religious group to continue to use symbolism and ideology from ancient Egypt, including the *ankh*. Because of this, we will look at the Coptic cross not as part of western culture, but as part of the continuation of ancient Egyptian symbolism into our times.

The Coptic Cross is the modern name of the *ankh*, used by the Coptic Church. The Coptic Church is the indigenized Egyptian Church that grew during the time of the Church Fathers, brought by Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, according to tradition, during the 1st Century AD. Alexandria, the centre of learning and knowledge in this time, was also the main centre of the Coptic Church (Gundani & Jafta 2009:80 & www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/). The *ankh*'s meaning of life and renewal resounded well with the message and ideology behind the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The local Egyptians, who for centuries had known of and used the *ankh* to symbolise exactly this ideology, used the *ankh* as symbol of this new religion based on renewal and rebirth, a common theme of the Bible (Cox 2007:30-31).

Figure 6.37 below shows a Coptic Cross/*ankh* on the roof of a Coptic church in Egypt.

Figure 6.51: Ankh used as cross on a Coptic Church (from www.acnuk.org/news.php/324/egypt-tribute-paid-to-coptic-religious-leader-pope-shenouda, accessed 11 Nov 2015)

Traditionally, the Coptic Church uses crosses that are in the traditional "Greek Cross" shape, but highly ornate, as seen below.

Figure 6.52: Official Emblem of the Eastern Orthodox Coptic Church (www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/)

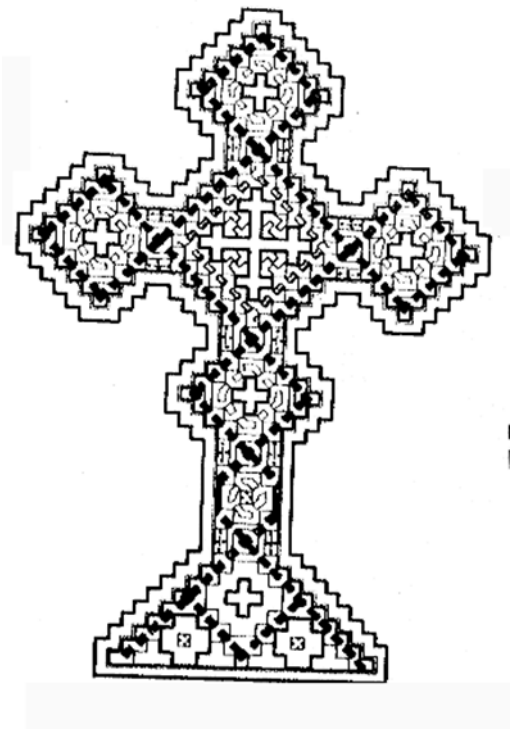

Figure 6.53: Popular exquisite forms of the cross. Note the many crosses and cross shapes inside the design, the overall shape formed being similar to an* ankh *(www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/)

Of particular interest to our study is the fact that they used the *ankh* in its original form and meaning in addition to this diversity of crosses. The *ankh*-form is also kept relatively intact and never as decorated as the crosses above. Figure 6.54 below shows and interesting merge of the *ankh* and a St. John Cross.

Figure 6.54: Coptic Cross Relief on display in the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, Hildesheim

The Copts believe these crosses to be the symbol of life, for as Christ rose from the dead and became "life", so the Christian is seen as being "alive". This is a recurring theme for Coptic believers, and ties in with the symbolism of the *ankh*. (www.copticchurch.net/topics/thecopticchurch/church1.html & www.coptic.net/EncyclopediaCoptica/, both accessed 11 Nov 2015)

The Church in Egypt seems to have therefore continued the tradition and usage of the *ankh* through their new Christian religion, making it one of their most powerful symbols. There is, however, no solid evidence to link the modern Latin Cross (the normal one everyone sees as a "Cross") as symbol to the ancient *ankh*. Ancient Sources, such as Tertullian (2nd century AD), all attest to the Latin Cross as symbol of the faith. The two were, and continue to be, used side by

side in Egypt especially. Another rather interesting symbolic development of the *ankh* in Christianity can be seen in Figure 6.55 below.

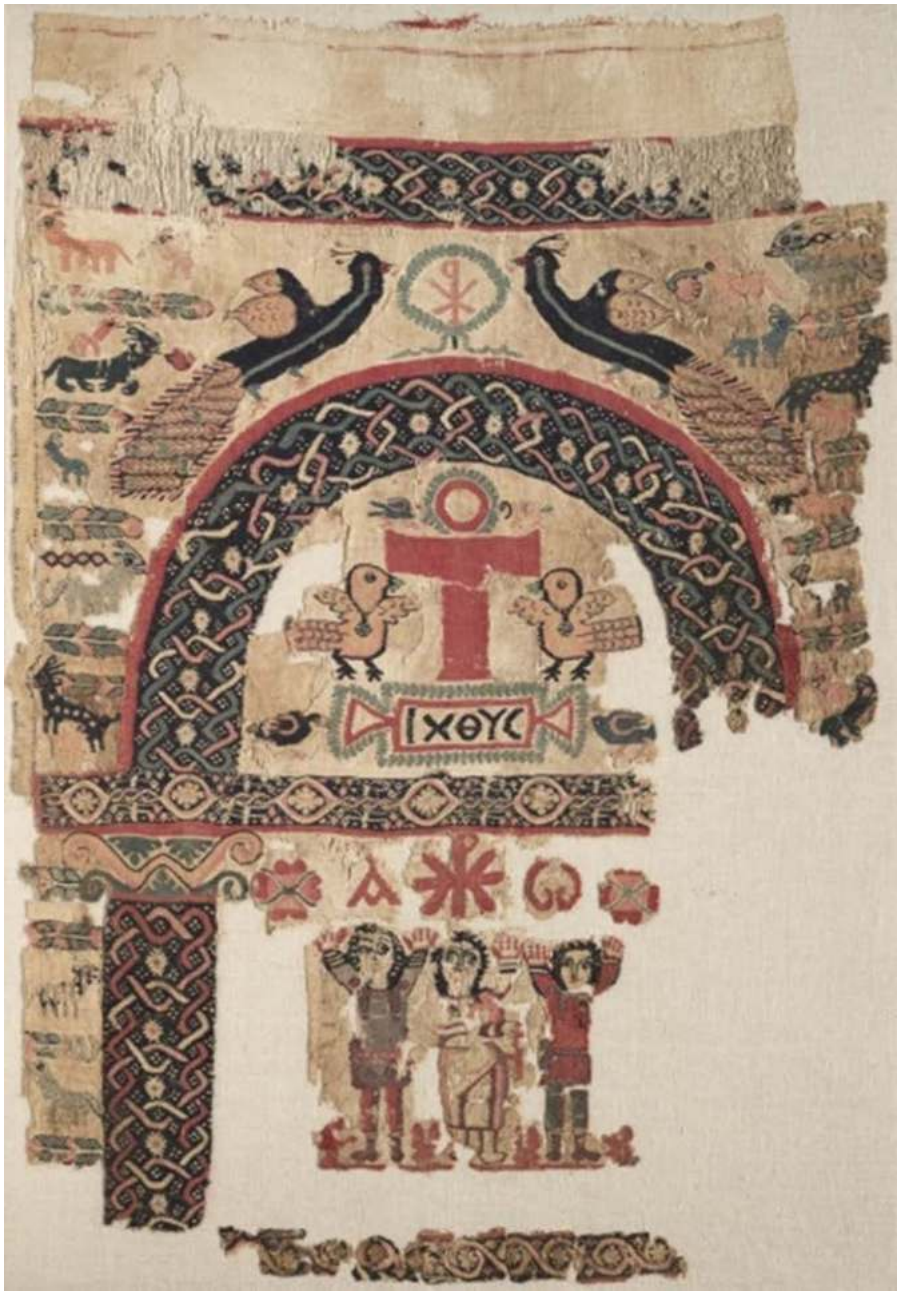

Figure 6.55: Tapestry showing the ankh associated with Christ, Egypt, Byzantine period, 6th century in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The tapestry above is quite rich in symbolism. At the bottom there are three figures. They may refer to Daniel's three friends thrown in the furnace by king Nebuchadnezzar after refusing to bow down to his golden idol (Daniel 3:19-30) as the museum description says (www.clevelandart.org/, accessed 14 Dec 2014) or it could be the three apostles on the mount

when Yeshua[23] was transfigured (Mathew 17:1-13). Directly above them a Chi-Rho symbol, an abbreviation for "Christ", is flanked by an "Alpha" and "Omega", a clear reference to Revelations 1:8: "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*." Although this verse clearly speaks of God, Christians apply it to His Son.

The symbols in the middle frame are of particular importance. Here an *ankh* tops an inscription of ΙΧΘΥΣ. These Greek characters are pronounced as "fish", but are also an acronym for Ιησους Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ, directly translated as "Jesus Christ God['s] Son, Saviour" (own rough translation). Such an inscription under an *ankh* may come as a shock to most Christians. It would seem that the Early Christians did not share their qualms and represented Yeshua as an *ankh*. The two sets birds, identified as eagles by the museum description, are in traditional Egyptian form flanking the *ankh* as Horus or *Wadjet Eye*s usually do. The one set are perched on the crossbar, the other are at the bottom.

Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

Figure 6.56: Front cover of the Codex Glazier

The cover of the Codex Glazier, a late-6th century AD Coptic codex of Acts 1-15:3, contains the same features as seen on the tapestry, with two birds flanking an *ankh*. There is no mention of

[23] The Aramaic name of Jesus, used as it is more accurate that "Jesus".

any reference to Christ, however, considering that it seems to have been a common symbol for Him, it is fitting that such a symbol should appear on the cover of a manuscript detailing the first years of the "new life" of the church (Sharpe 1996).

The tapestry in Figure 6.56 above sheds enormous light on how the Christians in Egypt interpreted Christianity using their ancient symbols. Christ, the resurrected "life" to follow is now represented by the symbol for "life". Figure 6.57 below shows a similar setting for the *ankh*.

Figure 6.57: Lithograph of a Coptic Motif, context unknown (www.copticchurch.net/topics/thecopticchurch/church1.html)

In the image above, the *ankh* is framed with laurel wreaths, the traditional symbol for victory, and flanked by and "Alpha" and "Omega" again. The entire scene, with the wreaths' stems forming a ribbon is reminiscent of the Chi-Rho symbol at the top of the tapestry in Figure 6.55 above. These images show tangibly what the Copts feel to be their Egyptian legacy. This legacy is explained on www.copticchurch.net, one of the official websites for the Coptic Church. It calls the Copts modern "Sons of Pharaohs", and explains that while other ancient civilizations looked to life on earth, the Egyptians were preoccupied by life after death and resurrection. This made conversion easier since, "….the Egyptian mind was absorbed in the world to come, and in the resurrection. When they were converted to Christianity, they became involved in awaiting the advent of the Risen Christ…." (www.copticchurch.net/topics/thecopticchurch/church1.html) It also goes on to confirm that the Egyptians accepted the *ankh* as their "cross" symbol, as symbol of Gods eternal life he grants to Christians. William Dalrymple agrees in his book, From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium (2004), that the Egyptian church leaned heavily on their ancient Egyptian roots in their understanding of Christianity and symbols.

Another use for the *ankh* in Christian society was on graves. Bagawat Necropolis in the Kharga Oasis in Egypt is a good example of this, and luckily for us, has been well-excavated and documented by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Christian graves dating from the 2nd right through to the 7th century AD have been found, consisting of tomb-chapels, some of which were arranged in order, and normal pit-graves. Both the tombs and the gravestones exhibited typical Egyptian styles of decorations and motifs, especially the *ankh*. The *ankh* was presumably used as a symbol of the Christian hope of resurrection (www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2012/kharga-oasis/bagawat-necropolis, accessed 11 Nov 2015 & Lythgoe 1908:203-204). One such tombstone is pictured below in Figure 6.58.

Figure 6.58: Circa 6th century AD Tombstone from the Kharga Oasis

The fact that Christians in Egypt used, and continue to use, the *ankh* as a part of their religious rite is testament to the enormous legacy and rich symbolism that the ancient Egyptians left behind. This was then passed on into modern Christian thought through tradition. The fact that

many Christians continue to use the cross as a symbol of Christian Life also harkens back to the *ankh* as symbol for life. This is echoed by Tom Harpur in a 2002 (reprint 2010) article in the Toronto Star, titled "A religious Symbol with many Meanings". Quoting Ancient Near Eastern scholars, he states that "The Cross was always a symbol of life….".

In fact, it is this very fact that De Zwaan takes full circle in his 1920 article on the Chi-Rho (☧) being a Christian version of the *ankh* (De Zwaan 1920:332). He goes so far as to state that since the *ankh* has always been a symbol for life, and that early Christians in Egypt probably reasoned that Christ was the "true *ankh*".

This connection and symbolism to ancient Egypt and the symbolism of the cross has much promise for further exploration and research.

6.4.1.1.2 The *Tau* Cross

The *Tau* Cross is simply the capital of the Greek letter *Tau*, τ, and thus a normal T. The reason for it being included here is that scholars tend to link the *ankh* and the *Tau* in origin and iconography, especially so in Greece.

It is interesting that whilst scholars in Egyptology debate the origin and development of the *ankh* (see Chapter 3), symbolists and others describe it as a "*Tau* with a handle for carrying" (Jewitt 1875:201) or more recently as the compounded form of the male and female sign (Healey 1977:290). In fact, Healey goes so far as to state that the *Tau* is the *Crux Anstata*, or *ankh* in Greece. This I find surprising considering that he then gives the Latin meaning of "Ansata" as "having handles" using the *ankh* as example and a normal *Tau* has no "handles" or loops.

In any event, considering that the *ankh* is attested as older than the Greek alphabet, it seems logical that the *Tau* did not serve as model for the development of the *ankh*. There is, however, great confusion around the *ankh*/*Tau* as symbols, as seen in Mourant Brock's book, *The Cross: Heathen and Christian* (1879), where he completely confused the two, ending up with the statement that the *ankh* is found in India (Brock 1879:26). The *Tau* Cross did become a popular monument in Europe, where it came to stand as an alternative to the traditional cross. A famous one is present on Tory Island, as described by Richard Crumlish (1993). Literature on the subject of the *Tau* is, however, outdated as can be seen by the sources quoted in this section. There is

also insufficient evidence to conclude that the *ankh* had anything to do with the *Tau*, or vice versa, save that they are both classified as crosses.

The cases of the *Tau* and Latin Crosses is quite interesting in that in both cases scholars were of the opinion that they came from, or had ties to, the *ankh*. In actual fact it has now been shown that they don't and that they were three different symbols used by different cultures. This also illustrates the tendency of modern people, especially Europeans to try and attribute things to ancient Egypt that simply do not belong, or have spider silk-thin connections.

6.4.2 Neo-Paganism

Neo-Paganism is a relatively modern concept. It refers to "alternative" belief systems in which people follow old religious customs, called "paths", especially that of the Celts (Wicca, Pagan and Druidic), ancient Egyptians (Worship of Isis and Osiris), Greeks (Hellenism) and various Earth Mother cults. These people are generally free-spirited and tend to believe themselves free from the control and "stifling of creativity" found in more organized beliefs. They are mostly all-inclusive in their practices, and accept symbols and meaning that they can relate to from most religions. "Pagans" do not have a central synodic authority, and are, in every sense of the word, independent and free of bureaucracy and control (www.paganfed.org/, www.paganfederation.org/, both accessed 9 November 2015). There is also a significant following in South Africa, especially amongst people of strong English and Welsh ancestry (sa.paganfederation.org/, accessed 9 November 2015).

Of particular interest to us is the Fellowship of Isis and the worship of Osiris and Isis. Practitioners in these cults use ancient Egyptian symbols directly in their original forms in ceremonies and rituals. There is even a "Temple of Isis" in Huntington Castle (also known as Clonegal Castle), in Co Carlow where most of antiquities' goddesses are combined into one. Even Virgo is made a goddess (shown on the altar Figure 6.59 below. Pictured below is Olivia Robertson, founder of the Fellowship of Isis in 1976 (www.fellowshipofisis.com/, accessed 11 Nov 2015).

Figure 6.59: Olivia Robertson in front of "The Goddess Altar", at the Temple of Isis in Huntington Castle

In the photo above, we can clearly see many Egyptian symbols and motifs. The most obvious is the *ankh*, here used as a sceptre of the priestess. In Figure 6.60 below we see Olivia as priestess again, this time with various Sun-disks. Most notably, there is one attached to the front of her head by a headpiece.

Figure 6.60: Olivia Robertson during another ritual

The banner behind the priestess is also of interest, with the Sun-disk extending *ankh*-less hands down to Isis, a common theme during Amarna. These rituals aim to emulate the ancient religious experience and "connect people with 'The Goddess'" (www.fellowshipofisis.com/, accessed 11

Nov 2015). They are, however, contemporary copies and emulations of ancient customs and practices, not the ancient ones themselves.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Ancient Egyptian symbols, especially the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye*, permeate our modern western culture. The iconography is present all over our culture and one is not hard pressed to find examples. However, one must also beware of becoming overzealous and just attributing an ancient Egyptian origin to just any symbol that may have a connection. This we could clearly see in supposedly "clear cut" cases such as the Halo/Nimbus and the Latin Cross, as discussed above.

We looked at how the mainstream public culture embraces ancient Egyptian symbols in their jewellery and fashion. How Egyptian symbols came to stand for abbreviations and corporate logos. We discussed how the Arts during the Renaissance and today were influenced by these same symbols, with ties lending powerful symbolic and iconographic meanings to the art. We looked at how modern musicians use Egyptian symbols in their music videos and costumes, spreading their use in mainstream culture. We looked at video games, popular culture and laypeople's usage of the three symbols. Then finally we assessed and surveyed the scope of our three ancient Egyptian symbols in religions, focusing on Christianity and Paganism, two of "Western" civilization's most popular belief systems. We also briefly made the case for leaving the Freemasons out of this discussion, as their ideas of Egyptian symbolism are, for the most part weird, and their usage purely ideological, since an *ankh* or *Wadjet Eye* is not used in a Masonic function, only the Sun-disk.

What we found was that, compared with the original ancient Egyptian symbols, many of the ones in western culture, especially Pop culture, are used only for their perceived aesthetic and "occult" symbolisms and never in their true forms. It would seem therefore that Western Culture is "ripping off" ancient Egyptian culture to promote ideas, make products more interesting and to connect one's idea to a more ancient source of mysticism.

This conclusion and results will be expanded on in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: BRIDGING THE GAP

In this chapter I will attempt to bridge the gap between the ancient and modern usage of the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* as a conclusion to the study. So far we have looked at the ancient Egyptian usage of the symbols and the Modern Western usage of the same forms separately. In this chapter we will combine these findings and gauge to what extent the *ankh*, Sun-disk and *Wadjet Eye* influences western culture, based on their usage in western culture as defined by the previous chapters.

The use of Emic Analysis, as defined and described in earlier chapters, will ensure that results and studies are not interpreted according to our own cultural interpretations and ideas. Conversely, we shouldn't interpret modern symbols and usage in light of the original ancient ones, rather focussing on the usage of each, and comparing that. This should be a pure unbiased comparison between how ancient Egyptians saw and used the symbols and how we see and use them today, with the conclusion pointing to how they influence Western Culture.

7.1 THE *ANKH*

The *ankh* was originally chosen for this study because of its popularity as symbol, both in ancient and modern times, as well as its modern equivalent in the Coptic church.

7.1.1 Ancient

We looked at the *ankh* as ancient Egyptian cultic and script symbol of life and life-force. As ancient symbol, we traced its use in ancient times and identified some interesting forms of use. One of these was the realisation that the "*ankh*" is a concept, not necessarily only of life, but of Life Force and the essence of what makes life "Life". This was shown through examining murals and other ancient images where the *ankh* was "passed" from a deity to the person or subject being addressed. A difference was identified between carrying/clasping the *ankh* by the handle and "applying" it to a subject, where the *ankh* symbol is seen to pass loop first from deity to subject. The *ankh* as symbol of "Life Essence" was also seen in its use as a form of mirror, in which the ancient Egyptians believed that one's *ka* or "life force" was visible. The *ankh* is also shown to be closely associated with the *was* sceptre and the *djed* pillar, as symbols of dominion and security, respectively.

The origins of the *ankh* were discussed, and the most logical/feasible in my opinion is Schwabe, Adams and Hodge with their article (1982) and subsequent book, *The Quick and the Dead* (2004) that postulates "An anatomical origin for *ankh*", with the *ankh* being the representation of a bull's thoracic vertebra. However, the *ankh* is an extremely complex symbol, and other "origins" theories may have merit as well, such as it being a simplified "knot of Isis" or *tyet* - E.A. Wallis Budge and Wolfhardt Westendorf 1904), (Gardiner 1927) and (Schaefer 1932), the Egyptian equivalent/form of the Ancient Near Easter "Double Axe" fertility symbol - (Petrie 1900), (Cook 1914) and (Conrad 1957) and other simpler theories, such as it being a sandal strap (Gardiner 1927).

Where Schwabe, et al, defines the origin and possible form of the *ankh*, the other scholars seem to be concerned with the abstract/spiritual aspects of the *ankh* as symbol. It would seem that at different stages of Egyptian symbolism, each of these different studies are correct. The ancient Egyptian *ankh* is therefore a conglomeration, as with most ancient Egyptian symbols, of life and all that "life" encompasses.

7.1.2 Modern

In Chapter 5 we identified three different areas in which the *ankh* is used: Jewellery, in popular culture and religious systems.

7.1.2.1 Popular Culture

In popular culture, the *ankh* is used as a prop and connotation to the ancient and mystical. In music videos, performances and video games the *ankh* is usually some form of symbol used, shown or worn to connect to and reference ancient Egypt and its mystique. In "*The Sign*" it was used as a metaphor and in some clever wordplay, connecting the *ankh* to the metaphorical sign the singer saw that she must "*move on to a new life*".

Famous people wear it to functions, artists (such as Rihanna, Beyoncé and others) use it as part of a persona, for shock value to gain more attention (as Rihanna did at the Super Bowl) and generally ride its fame and easily recognisable form to make themselves more popular.

In games it is used as a connection and symbol for Egypt. Only recently in the *Assassin's Creed* series has the symbol's true meaning of carrier of the life essence been used, albeit only in

passing in *Assassin's Creed: Rogue*. In games such as "*Smite*", the *ankh* and other symbols are simply used as decorative and culturally-relevant pieces.

7.1.2.2 Religious Systems

The *ankh* is, and always has been, a religious symbol. This is also shown quite clearly in the modern cultic use of the symbol. Modern Egyptian Copts still use the same symbol as their ancient Egyptian forbearers to show life, using it for the Messiah, who is the embodiment of "life", as per the gospels. Today it is the most recognizable symbol of the Coptic faith.

The relatively new "pagan" circles also use the symbol as a cultic and religious icon, with the Fellowship of Isis integrating the *ankh* into their rituals. These are, however, not original Egyptian rituals, but are a conglomerate of different versions, religious views and philosophies. For instance, no priest of Isis, Horus or Osiris was ever shown as carrying a staff topped with an *ankh*. Yet, this is exactly what Olivia Robertson, the founder and chief priestess of the Fellowship of Isis, carries as symbol of her office.

7.1.3 Effects

It would seem that the *ankh* is generally more of a "cultural item" and "curiosity" than an actual religious or cultural symbol, except for Egyptian Copts, who use it as one of their main religious symbols and identifier. In popular culture it is an easily recognisable symbol of being different. The modern day pagan cults that use it may reference the ancient meaning and power, but generally only seem to use it as symbol of ancient powers and mystique.

7.2 SUN-DISK

The Sun-disk is one of the most universal symbols used in the cultures on earth. Almost every culture has a sun symbol and depicted the sun in some way or other. In this study we focussed on the clearly Egyptian sun-disk in modern society, such as the Winged Sun-disk.

7.2.1 Ancient

The sun-disk is one of the most self-explanatory symbols that we have looked at in this study. It is directly derived from the physical form of the sun, with some added iconography and symbolism, such as wings and scarab beetles. As symbol of Ra it wears the uraeus. As Winged sun-disk there are direct connotations to Horus, especially the more violent incarnation as seen

in the Myth of Horus at Edfu. This “Horus of Edfu” is the divine protector of Ra and the one who smites his enemies and takes the form of a winged sun-disk. This is also a form of the “young” sun in the morning - *Ra-Herakhty*.

To the ancient Egyptians the Winged Sun-disk was a symbol of protection and divine covering, and was placed over important people/scenes in murals and also over the heart/pectoral of a mummy case. It also shared iconography with Nekhbet and her role as protector of the king and, in effect, the land.

The winged scarab (with and without a sun-disk) and pure sun-disk, such as the one used by Akhenaten, were seen as images of the sun and what the sun meant at that particular time. During Akhenaten’s time, this meant the pure sun orb and his relation to it as sole high priest. The winged scarab was seen as the young sun, a symbol of rebirth and rejuvenation, and used on the mummies as such.

The sun-disk was therefore purely what it is - a representation of the fiery orb/dick that passes overhead each day. Unlike the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye*, it does not carry abstract ideologies and multiple symbolisms in ancient Egyptian culture. It simply is the sun, and represents the warmth, fertility aspect and protection/security that the sun offers to a predominantly agricultural society, as the ancient Egyptians were.

7.2.2 Modern

In the modern-day usage of the Sun-disk we looked at the Scottish-Egyptian phase of architecture during the middle to late industrial eras (late 1700’s to 1800’s). During this period the Scottish Egyptianised their building style, with predominantly sun-disks, winged sun-disks and hieroglyphic symbols adorning the masonry of many buildings. The windows and doorways also took a more Egyptian look and feel. Even their factories were built with Egyptian facades, with the portrayal of the Rhymney Ironworks in Wales by John Petherick showing the central building with a huge Sun-disk on its roof, shining as a beacon. This movement had little real influence on our western Culture as a whole it seems, and after the mid-1800’s the trend was quickly reversed.

This we can see as a copy of the original usage of the Sun-disk as motif in architecture. Whether the Scottish knew the real meanings is unclear, though Packer (2012) seems to think that it was merely a celebration of their heritage and not something Egyptian in symbolism.

Another possible influence of the Sun-disk may have lain in the Halo/Nimbus, used in the art of Europe to denote people and figures of importance and particular traits of righteousness and holiness. However, as we pointed out when discussing this, there are few parallels between the ancient Egyptian Sun-disk and the Halo/Nimbus other than the shape. When the Sun-disk is used with figures in ancient Egypt, it is predominantly used together with gods and goddesses and never with humans. It is also positioned above the head, as opposed to behind it as the Halo is. We also pointed out that the Persian version more closely resembled the Halo/Nimbus form than the ancient Egyptian one did.

7.2.3 Effects

The usage of the Sun-disk in western culture is minimal compared to the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye*'s popularity as mystical elements and signs. Its brief rise in Scotland was only as a result of being "packaged" as part of the ancient Egyptian motif and not because of any meaning to the Scots themselves. In fact, even in this its usage was eclipsed by their fondness of obelisk and pyramid shapes also derived from Egypt.

The cultural effect of the Sun-Disk on modern western culture is quite low, compared to the influence and modern usage of the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye*.

7.3 WADJET EYE

Of the three symbols that we researched in this study the *Wadjet Eye* seems the most complex and difficult to understand. Where the *ankh* and Sun-disk are generally used for or associated with one idea or deity, the *Wadjet Eye* has plural meanings and interpretations. This is even carried over to western art that uses the symbol.

7.3.1 Ancient

In ancient Egypt the *Wadjet Eye* was a very complex symbol. As symbol it came to represent "healing" and "healing/restoration forces", as well as the main symbol of the goddess Wadjet. It is also a symbol of various other goddesses and concepts. It is also a symbol of the Eye that Horus lost to Seth (both of his eyes, according to one version) during the Contendings myth cycle. In his dictionary of hieroglyphics E.A. Wallis Budge lists many different meanings of the character and word "Wadjet", showing its remarkable plurality as symbol.

Another usage for the symbol was as unit sign for the *hekat*, a unit in which grain was measured for an offering in temples, referencing the eye(s) that Horus lost in his fight against Seth. In fact, the symbol's general iconography seems to resolve around this central theme of loss, restoration and rejuvenation. This would explain its presence on coffins and sarcophagi where it would then seemingly ensure the rebirth and regeneration of the body in the afterlife.

The symbol is variously associated with the uraeus (through the goddess Wadjet), falcon Horus (through the many different references to healing and regeneration), Hathor (through iconography showing her as the Hathor-cow) and Ra (through Wadjet being his sun-eye). The healing aspect of the papyrus-dwelling cobra Wadjet and the healed eyes of Ra and Horus are what drew the image into the iconographical spheres of these very diverse yet connected gods and ideas.

To this end the *Wadjet Eye* was used as symbol in murals and scenes, sometimes in different settings and contexts. It was also used as a protective amulet for hanging around the neck to ward off evil spirits/illness it would seem. Several healing spells also mention it in reference to Isis nursing a sick Horus.

The usage of the *Wadjet Eye* in a wide, varied setting all across the ancient Egyptian mythological board is, in my opinion, indicative of its role as symbol of the ancient Egyptian pantheon, specifically the rather central themes of restoration, healing and wholeness.

7.3.2 Modern

In modern culture the *Wadjet Eye* was found to be popular as an abstract symbol in reference to both ancient Egypt and abstract divine ideas. This latter idea was used extensively by modern artist Fabrizio Clerici in his Variazioni Tebane collection. In this collection he uses an eye-symbol that is remarkably close to the *Wadjet Eye* in iconography and symbolism.

Leon Battista Alberti, an Italian architect from the Renaissance, also explored the abstract symbolisms of the *Wadjet Eye*, and sought to equate the symbol of God as the Eye. This seems to be based on a very rudimentary knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphs, as he studied Greek scholars such as Horapollo, who in turn commented on hieroglyphics and their meanings. Alberti himself wrote on hieroglyphs in his *De Re Aedifica*, a seminal work on architecture, symbolism

and symbolism in humans. He also created the “Winged Eye” from this philosophy - an abstract symbol of an eye with wings, and of a form similar to the *Wadjet Eye*.

The *Wadjet Eye* is also used indirectly in the movie *Now you see me* where it is seen as a symbol and namesake of a secret group of ancient Egyptian magicians that keep the “true art of magic” alive. This plays on the modern concepts of Egypt being such a mysterious and magical place.

The *Wadjet Eye* is also used extensively in the pop-industry where it is used as a form for eyeliner to get a more mystique/unique look. This can be attributed to the industry norm of simply trying to gain attention by doing something different, as most of the artists reviewed in Chapter 6 did. The use of the Eye usually gains then notoriety amongst conspiracy theorists who believe the eye, incorrectly, to be a form of the All-Seeing-Eye of Masonic fame.

In keeping with this grab at attention, organizations such as *Wadjet Eye* Games and Tour Egypt both use stylized versions of the *Wadjet Eye* as logos. Brand recognition is, of course, instant and unique. We also looked at the cover art of Kamelot, a metal band with artificial mystical and ”deep” overtones. On their CD cover they used the *ankh* and *Wadjet Eye* together with all sorts of other mystical signs and symbols generally labelled as “occult” by conservative people.

The *Wadjet Eye* is also used in a surprisingly true to original iconographic/symbolic way in its role in the development of the ℞ symbol in the pharmaceutical industry. The *Wadjet Eye*’s association with measures of the *hekat* led to its Romanization as a symbol for measures in apothecaries and what would later become pharmacies. Ironically, the “x” of the symbol spawned a whole series of “medicinal” abbreviations, all based on the *Wadjet Eye*.

We also looked at the *Wadjet Eye* with regards to the Masonic All-Seeing-Eye and found no correlation between the two. This is, in part, due to the mason’s misunderstanding of ancient Egypt and their insistence that Egypt was the beginning of all high-culture.

7.3.3 Effects

It would seem that the pluralistic nature of the *Wadjet Eye* in ancient Egypt has spilled over into modern iconography as a symbol that “shows anything abstract or mystical”. The *Wadjet Eye* has become something of a popular symbol to use for ancient Egypt and mystique, with some of its symbolism being used in modern pharmaceutical symbolism. Its effect on Western Culture is, in

my opinion, on par with that of the *ankh*, as it has a tangible impact on western cultures' symbolism and art.

7.4 IN WESTERN CULTURAL THOUGHT

In looking at the different ways in which ancient Egyptian symbols are used in modern culture, we can see how they are understood by looking at the context and specific usage of the symbols. As we saw when discussing the symbolic use of the *ankh* in popular music, it would seem that European-based artists have a better understanding of the meanings and innuendos of ancient Egyptian symbols, as opposed to American-based artists who seem to use it as shock-value to get more attention.

This ties in with what we discussed in Chapter 3 about modern Western culture searching for enchantment and mystique in ancient cultures and traditions. This leads to the usage of these symbols as a way to revive some enchantment in our otherwise materialistic and "disenchanted" lives.

7.5 EFFECT ON SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa being seen as part of, or at least influenced by, Western Culture, shares in the effects of ancient Egyptian culture on our own. However, since South Africa is not directly influenced by ancient Egypt, and generally has other cultures to draw from, South African culture as a whole does not lean towards the use of ancient Egyptian symbols. The reason for this lies in three related areas of our own culture: Strong Local Culture, Religion and Education.

7.5.1 Strong Local Culture

South Africa's local culture is comparatively strong as opposed to the general "Western" culture that is an amalgamation of different Mediterranean, European and American cultures, which lends itself strongly to acculturation and cultural acceptance (generally speaking). In South Africa we already have an amalgamation of Eastern, African and European cultures that form who we are today. This means that local people, while listening to and appreciating "Western Pop" culture, are not inclined to leave their local culture for it and be too heavily influenced by it. This goes for the cultural artefacts in pop culture as well.

Local South African Culture is also not in direct contact with the Mediterranean or Egypt, and will therefore feel a very much diffused effect from these cultures.

7.5.2 Religion

Traditional religion is one of the pillars of South African culture. Traditional European Churches, Traditional African Belief Systems, Islam, Hinduism and many other mixtures and subdivisions of these religious systems exist in South Africa as part and parcel of our culture. These systems generally view ancient symbols, especially Egyptian ones, as pagan and occult, therefore shunning them.

This phenomenon can be seen as a direct result of the "close-mindedness" of South Africans in general, that simply will not accept another culture's practices while barely tolerating their existence - ironic in the light of our mixed heritage as a nation.

There are, however, Pagan Federation and alternative groups in South Africa that embrace these symbols, as well as some academics, as we have seen in previous chapters (sa.paganfederation.org/).

7.5.3 Education

The last area is education. Our education system does not expose young people to cultures outside of the many we have in our own borders. "Outside" cultures, such as those of the Ancient Near East, South America and Far East, are mentioned and some information is given, but the majority of students do not come face to face with Egyptian (or other) culture as such, as they would have if whole chapters devoted to just that.

This, in effect, means that South Africans would need to do their own research to find out about these outside cultures, such as ancient Egypt, since their own local culture does not incorporate it, as say, the United States of America or United Kingdom does.

7.6 CONCLUSION

In bridging the gaps between ancient and modern, we have discovered that while ancient Egyptian signs and symbols have, in fact, quite an impact on modern Western culture, it is generally purely aesthetic and for show or to convey a sense of mysticism. The symbols are, with some exceptions, not used in modern culture as commonly as they would have been if ancient Egypt had more of an impact on western culture.

However, there does exist quite a number of uses in western culture to prove that ancient Egypt did, in fact, contribute in some form or another to our own culture. These contributions seem to generally be “under the hood” of our culture and not in the form of symbols, and therefore not in plain sight. Furthermore, South Africa is still isolated enough from the world that we have no purely South African cultural traits which exhibit ancient Egyptian cultural influence.

This is not to say that ancient Egypt had so little an influence on Western culture as a whole that we can negate it completely. The rise of “pagan” societies, the continued use of the *ankh* in the Coptic church, the abstract ideas expressed by the *Wadjet Eye* and shown in Renaissance thinking and modern art will always continue to make its presence felt, whether by parody in modern pop culture and movies, or by popularization in other media, ancient Egypt is here to stay.

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE STUDIES

Besides the *ankh*, *Sun-Disk* and *Wadjet Eye*, there are many more symbols and concepts that we have inherited from ancient Egypt. In literature and the arts one can find many varied concepts, symbols and symbolism that have their roots in ancient Egyptian culture and thought. Through emic analysis, it is possible to trace the true origins of these concepts accurately and with as little bias as possible. This study has shown that the *ankh*, *Sun-Disk* and *Wadjet Eye* are the most popular because they are the most powerful of ancient Egyptian symbols, and the most recognizable.

Future research can be conducted with more focus on the mechanics of inter-age cultural exchange as well as using the same methodology to look at ideologies that have also been introduced into our modern culture. An example of such an ideology is the fascination with the afterlife and magic that we share with the ancient Egyptians in the form of stories about mythical creatures and spirits (found in the Horror movie genre). These can be compared to the myths about the afterlife as found in the Book of the Dead and other superstitions involving the dead.

Other symbols that are used in modern society that can also be studied are the shen rings, architectural use of monumental buildings and spaces and the use of the triangle/pyramid/obelisk form, popular in the US and old European cities. The usage of snakes as motifs such as the medical use of the twin snakes symbol of the Greek Asclepius cult (which had Egyptian elements) is also an interesting field of study.

As a continuation of this study, one can trace the steps and stages through which the symbols or a particular one symbol arrived in our modern culture. Alternatively, one can compare the usage of these three Egyptian symbols against the usage of symbols from other cultures, such as Mesopotamia and the Far East. This would show the true impact and “cultural strength” of ancient Egypt as compared to other cultures.

On a symbolic note, the origin and meaning of the *ankh*, given here as of bovine origin, can also be studied further and a proper survey/review of Gordon and Schwabe’s theory that the *ankh* has its origins in the thoracic vertebrae of bulls can made. The *Wadjet Eye* also has merit as subject of an in-depth study which would focus on its many uses, origins and unique iconography.

The aim of such studies would be to come to a widely accepted fixed definition for each symbol, to be used as reference in ancient studies. Such a definition would also need to conform to the principles of an emic study, as we want to define the symbols according to how the ancient Egyptians saw them, not our own views as influenced by our own cultures.

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